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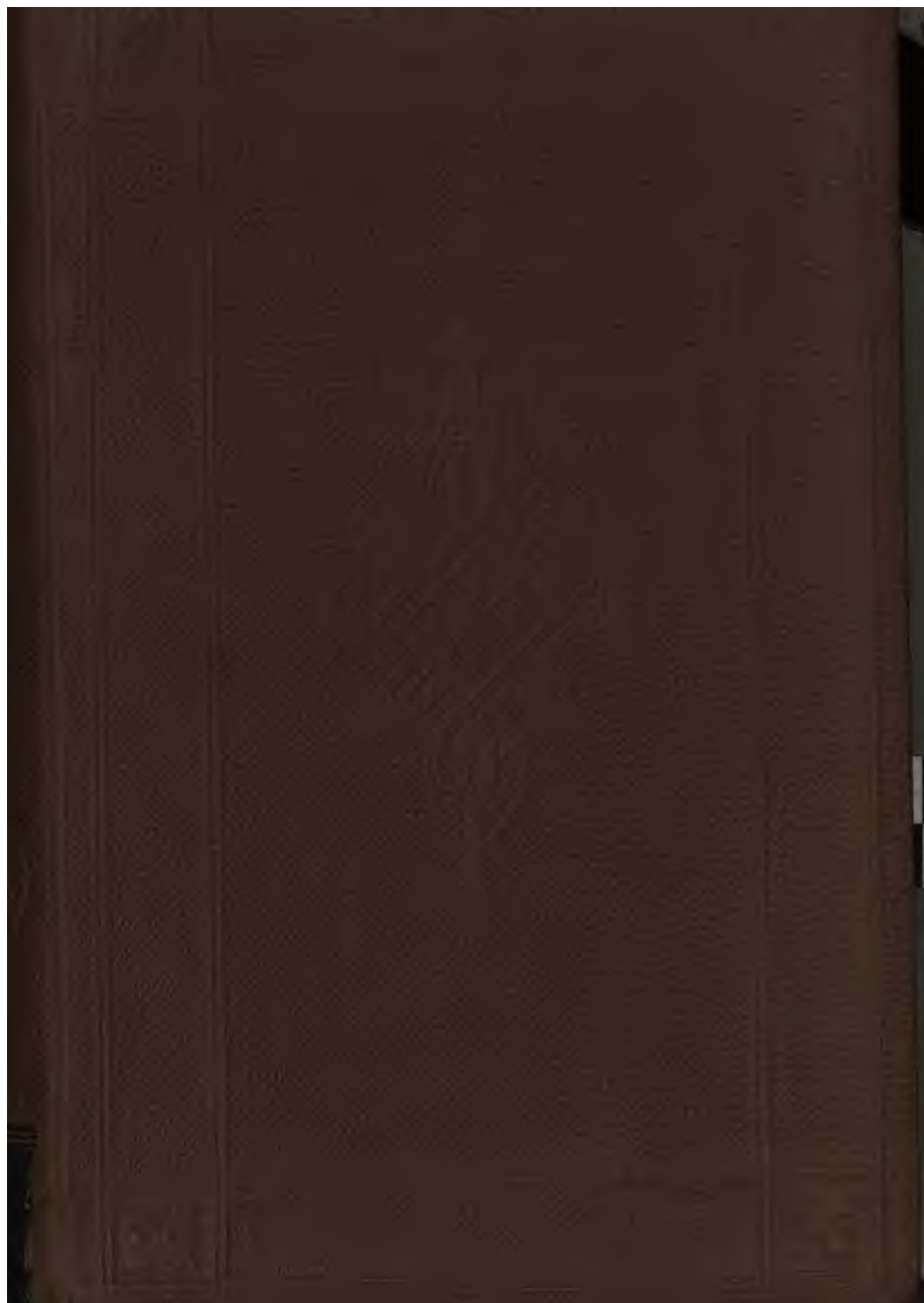
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N E L L Y M I L E S:

A TALE OF REAL LIFE.

By R A E R A E.



London:

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1865.

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NELLY MILES.

CHAPTER I.

“WHAT a glorious sunset! Surely there can scarcely be anything more beautiful than this quiet Dellcombe, Mrs. Maxwell?”

The speaker was young, childlike, and lovely as she was young; the soft, appealing, truthful blue eyes, the bright golden hair, the rounded blooming cheeks, the rich red lips, the light, yet full, and gracefully moulded form, all spoke of the first spring time of life; when sorrow or sickness, or even suspicion of the trials and dangers, and harshnesses of the cold, weary pilgrimage, which may be in store, is yet unknown—almost unimagined. She was standing at the open window of an apartment in one of those old manor houses, which are at once the glory and the peculiarity of our land, and in which the fair county of Yorkshire—rich in almost every species of nature’s gifts and social attractions—so peculiarly abounds. The Maxwells

of Dellcombe Manor resided on their ample estate ; ample, because it gratified every want and even every fancy which the sober Yorkshire squires of past days ever dreamed of indulging. The Mr. Maxwell, of the time of our story, some sixty years ago, had not learned to be more luxurious or less benevolent than his ancestors, and having but one son to claim his cares or his purse, he had ample means, and kindly interest to bestow on his poorer neighbours. As we before said, Nelly Miles—whom we suppose must be called our heroine, though she would have opened her large blue eyes in timid wonder at the idea—was standing at a window of the manor house, when she suddenly gave vent to the naïve exclamation recorded above, and the recipient of the said burst of delight was the good, kind Mrs. Maxwell, the German wife of the old English squire. She was one of the true, kindly, simple domestic German matrons, made familiar to us through the medium of English and German writers, and so completely naturalised that even the blunt Yorkshire natives scarcely remembered that she was a foreigner, or distrusted her as such ; and Nelly Miles, the only daughter of a tenant of Mr. Maxwell, himself of an old yeoman family, looked on her, and loved her as a second mother ; for the accomplished lady of the manor had, wisely or unwisely, bestowed

some time and much pains in imparting many of her attainments to the lovely child who was to her almost as a daughter. Mrs. Maxwell was sitting in a large easy chair near the window, where her young *protégée* was standing, her still fine eyes calmly bent on the gorgeous sky, with an expression of sadness, which told that some painful feeling mingled with her admiration of its beauty. The patient, suffering look on her delicate features, and the evident languor of her attitude as she reclined in her cushioned seat might well explain, to an experienced eye, the secret of that pensive gaze.

She did not at once answer Nelly's question, and the girl turned to see the cause of her silence, with a quick, anxious look.

"Are you tired, dearest Mrs. Maxwell?" she said: "you look pale and sad, and here have I been tormenting you with my silly talk."

"No, dear child, no; not more fatigued than I usually am in the evening. I was only thinking of a time long ago, and of a father very dear to me—memories which your words recalled. When I was your age, Nelly, I too thought my home the loveliest and dearest spot on God's earth, and now, I am old enough to know and feel that *all* His works are good and beautiful, and that it is those who inhabit them, who make them still more dear and precious."

"But, Mrs. Maxwell, look at those rugged, bold hills just glittering in the sun, and that calm peaceful river shining so brightly, and those rich woods. I am sure I shall never love any place but this, or be happy anywhere else."

"God grant you may never be tried, Nelly; but you are very wrong, my child, you have never known sorrow or trial, which sooner or later comes to us all. Pray to be prepared, Nelly—strength and patience will be given with the need, if we only seek for it."

The girl threw herself on her knees by her friend; it was her favourite, caressing attitude.

"Dear, dear, Mrs. Maxwell, what do you fear; why do you talk thus to-night, when all should be so happy, bright, and peaceful?"

"Because, my love, I may not be here long to warn and strengthen you; and it may happen that you, like many a one, young and fragile as yourself, may have to support others, and act with firmness and energy, instead of leaning on those around you, as you have hitherto done; it is not being prepared for trouble that brings sorrow, Nelly. Now, sing me the Evening Hymn, and then I shall send you away, or your good mother will find fault with my selfishness."

Nelly did as she was desired, and sang Bishop Heber's beautiful Hymn, with exquisite feeling and

pathos. She had a rich, fresh voice, which Mrs. Maxwell (like most of her country-women, a good musician,) had taken pains to cultivate. Nelly was certainly a very moderate performer, and her vocal powers were limited to the simpler and more touching ballads of her own land; but still there were many who would have preferred her clear sweet tones and distinct enunciation to far more highly trained execution.

The task finished, she tied on her hat, and kissing Mrs. Maxwell with even warmer affection, and certainly far more gravity than usual, she took her way to the Grange, as John Miles's homestead was called by the villagers.

She was thoughtful and even sad as she walked along—a most rare mood for Nelly; and her bounding step was quiet and steady as she passed along the Manor House shrubbery and small park, till she came to the winding lane that led to the farm.

The “half child, half woman” thoughts which occupied her mind so entirely, as to make her forget for the moment that the evening was waning fast, and her mother probably looking anxiously for her return, were new, and yet wholesome ones, to her.

For the first time she began to think of the future, instead of the happy present, to realize the

possibility of sorrow and trial coming to her, as well as to others, and to ask herself whether she could bear it, as Mrs. Maxwell had told her she ought to do ; and more than all, whether she could support others, whom she dearly loved, if grief came on them. Nelly knew well that she would and could sacrifice her own pleasure and happiness for the sake of her parents, her young brother, her dear friends at the Manor House ; and, to do her justice, it was not her own will, but her power, that she so mistrusted.

“ I am so young and ignorant, and thoughtless,” she reflected. “ If I had not my dear mother and Mrs. Maxwell to teach and help me, what should I do ? And if they were taken from me, or if they wanted comfort and support, instead of being always ready to give it, I am sadly afraid I should be very weak and useless. I must try and do more justice to the pains Mrs. Maxwell has taken with me, and as she says, God will give strength, if I ask Him for it, when He gives the trouble and the duties which will need it.”

The sweet face, which had been somewhat troubled in its expression, grew calm and hopeful once more as this soothing thought passed through her mind. She raised her clear blue eyes to the cloudless sky, and for a moment or two, the lips moved in silent prayer. And then with a firmer

and quicker step she walked on till she came within sight and hearing of her own dear home, when she paused once more, till the sound of her own name in her mother's loving tone, recalled her more effectually to herself than any mere self-reproach or argument could have done. The next moment she was in the large, pretty, ivied porch of the farm house, bending over the chair of an aged woman, of pleasing but wasted features, whose eyes were fixed listlessly on the well-known scene, where her own youth and age had been spent. Beside her, at a little distance, stood a still young and handsome woman, looking alternately at the venerable form of her mother-in-law, and at the distant gate, which opened on the road leading to the village.

"Darling granny, how well you are looking to-night," exclaimed Nelly, kissing her grandmother's cheek. "It is a proof you are much better, to see you in your old place. But, mother, dear, what makes you look so restless and anxious; has not my father come home yet?"

"No, love, and I am rather uneasy, though I know it is foolish to be so, when so many things may have kept him late; but still I do wish he would come."

Poor Nelly! everyone and everything seemed to conspire to add to the vague apprehensions

Mrs. Maxwell's words had conjured up, but the sight of her mother's pale face chased away all thought of self from her loving little heart, and she exclaimed gaily.

"They shall go without supper, as I used to do, when I played truant as a little girl. I shall run down to the knoll to see if they are coming, and be ready to give them a scolding as they pass."

She flew lightly down the slope and over the low stile which led to the knoll of which she had spoken.

In a few moments the waving of her snow white handkerchief gave notice of the approach of farmer Miles and his young son; and Mrs. Miles gave an involuntary sigh of relief. "Thank God!" she murmured, "I was strangely terrified; I suppose I am not well, or I could not be so foolish."

"Come, dear mother," she said aloud, turning to the old lady, "it is time I should take you in, the night air is bad for you."

She was about to assist the old lady to rise, when her husband and their two children entered the garden, and in another moment stood in the pretty porch.

John Miles was the type of the fine manly English farmer, somewhat above the middle height, strongly, but not clumsily built, and with an open honest face, which inspired confidence and regard

at once. His son, a lad of some seventeen or eighteen years of age (scarcely a twelvemonth older than Nelly), was a faithful counterpart of his father in person and character. Nelly, on the contrary, inherited the more delicate and graceful beauty of her mother, refined by the superior training which her kind friend at the Manor House had bestowed upon her.

But on the present occasion, the frank genial face of John Miles was grave and cloudy, and the voice in which he greeted his mother and wife was constrained and sad, a complete contrast to its usual hearty joyous tones.

"Well, mother, better to-night, I see. Wife, let us have supper at once, will you? I am tired, and not over well."

"What is it, John, dear?" asked the wife anxiously, "has anything crossed you, or are you really ill?"

"No, no, wife, don't you worry yourself about me, I'm only a bit tired and over done with the heat."

The sharp tone and words were so new and strange to the loving wife, that an unbidden tear started to her eye, and she staid behind a moment (while her husband led his mother into the house) partly to conceal her emotion, partly to question her son as to the cause of her husband's discomposure.

"Tom, what has happened? something must have vexed your father sadly."

"No, mother, nothing that I know of, he seemed all right when we left the nine acre field; but I noticed that he started and turned pale and frightened like, as we passed some strange men, who have been hanging about all day. I saw them at the 'Red Lion,' as I went from dinner, and I noticed that they whispered to each other and looked earnestly at my father, though I don't think he saw them then; but to-night he did, and I fancied he must have known one of them, he gave such a strange start, and turned away so quickly."

Mrs. Miles was about to question her son again as to the appearance of the strangers, when her husband's voice calling her stopped any further dialogue, and the little party sat down to supper in a far less happy and cheerful mood than usual at that joyous meal. There is something peculiarly merry and unrestrained in the evening meal at a country farm house, when the business of the day is over, and the happy consciousness of duty performed gives an additional zest to the refreshment and recreation, fairly earned by toil. John Miles and his wife seemed gradually to recover their cheerfulness, during this festive hour, under the enlivening influence of Tom's merry village tales, and

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they told of some sad foreboding, some presentiment of separation and evil to come.

They rose from their knees, and a deep silence ensued, suddenly broken by a sharp knock, which made Mrs. Miles turn pale, and Nelly give a faint scream. John went to the door, and to the inexpressible relief of the whole party, the well known forms of the Squire and his son appeared.

"Well, John, how's the mother to-night? All right again, eh? Harry and I were passing, so we thought we'd just call, as we saw the lights in the window. But, hey day, what's all this? Mrs. Miles with pale cheeks, my pretty Nelly with tears in her eyes, and you, John, looking as if all the hay was on fire, and the wheat mildewed. What on earth has come to you all?"

The question was easier asked than answered, for no one really knew what was the matter with them, but at last Nelly sobbed out,

"We think my father is ill, dear sir, and that makes us anxious."

"Nonsense, silly child," exclaimed John; "I am all right—only a little tired and hipped, I fancy. The Squire will laugh at us all."

"No, John, no. I never suspected you of any folly or weakness; but still it happens sometimes to us all, when we are not quite ourselves, to take a dark view of things."

"I am sorry to have broken upon your privacy so unceremoniously just now, but I was anxious to learn how your mother was progressing."

"Thank you, sir, I am glad to say she is much better."

"Well, I am indeed delighted to hear it, and will now wish you good night."

"Good night, Nelly, and dry those pretty eyes."

"Wait a moment, sir," said John, "I'll walk a little way with you."

Kissing his children he told them to go to bed, and then turning to his wife said, "I shall not be gone long; don't look so frightened; indeed I will return in a few minutes."

"Do not go out to-night, dear John, for I am sure there is some great calamity at hand;" and the poor woman fell sobbing in her husband's arms.

"Come, dear Mary, look up, let me go, I have a word to speak to the Squire in private."

Saying this he placed his trembling wife in a chair, and with a fervent "God bless you!" he disappeared.

The children did not go to bed as they were bid, but sat up with their mother, listening with throbbing hearts for the return of their father's footsteps, which came not.

Minutes past, and lengthened into quarters, till a full hour and more had elapsed, still he came not.

The troubled wife opened the door, straining her eyes through the darkness for a glimpse of her husband's form ; but, alas ! no moving object could be discerned.

" Tom, take the lantern, go seek your father, it is almost two hours since he left us," and the poor woman's troubled eyes were rivetted on the clock.

" Nell, dear, I cannot remain any longer here, in this dreadful suspense, fetch me my bonnet, I'll walk as far as the Squire's, your father might have been persuaded to have accompanied him home."

Taking the bonnet from her daughter's hand, she rushed from the Grange, and almost flew across the meadows, calling her husband's name, to which no answer came.

When she arrived at the Manor House, to her dismay she found it closed, and the inmates gone to rest.

Uttering a wild scream, she fell senseless on the ground.

" What was that ?" exclaimed Mrs. Maxwell. " It was a woman's scream, and from the back of the house. Do see what it is, my dear, it sounded strangely like Mrs. Miles's voice, but that cannot be."

Mr. Maxwell rushed down stairs, and opening the door, saw the apparently lifeless form of poor



Mrs. John Miles lying on the threshold. He raised her in his arms, and was about to carry her into the house, when the pale, terrified face of poor Tom appeared at the door, lantern in hand.

"Is my mother here, sir?" he said, huskily.

Mr. Maxwell invited him to enter, and after summoning assistance for the poor woman, questioned the lad as to what had happened during the last hour. The good Squire was not altogether surprised at the recital, vague as it necessarily was. John Miles had confessed to him, though obscurely, that he had misgivings as to his own fate. He had even exacted a promise that Mr. Maxwell would, in the event of anything occurring to him, watch over the helpless ones, who would be left without a protector.

But the Squire had rather understood the hints thus given to refer to the possibility of premature or sudden death, and the disappearance so strangely following that conversation, excited natural but most painful impressions in the worthy man's mind. But he carefully abstained from giving any hint of his ideas to the stunned and terrified Tom, and kindly occupied the poor fellow's mind for the moment by sending him for Dr. Bright, the village surgeon; and desiring him to return to his sister and have everything prepared for his mother's reception, so soon as she could be conveyed home, which he

rightly judged would be the wisest and kindest course for the parties more immediately concerned in this affliction.

* * * *

A week had passed—only one short week—and yet what a change had taken place at the Grange, that once happy, busy abode. The neglected flowers, the closed windows, the petted heifer (once Nelly's joyous playfellow), wandering restlessly about to find her absent mistress, the subdued voices, the stealthy steps, all told of misery, sickness, and death. Yes, the relentless enemy had laid his hand on the aged mother of the absent Miles, too feeble to bear the shock of her son's disappearance and doubtful fate, and now threatened a yet heavier blow in the person of the stricken wife, the all but widow, who had lain for days in a state only varying between unconsciousness, and delirium yet more distressing.

Nelly had indeed been called on to perform the duties inculcated on her by Mrs. Maxwell's wise, warning voice. Sorrow had come, and in a shape which threw on her the burden of supporting others yet more afflicted than herself, and taught her that life is given for higher purposes than the enjoyment even of God's works and blessings. And the young girl had borne the trial nobly, uncomplainingly, though the blooming cheek was

pale, and the bright eyes dim with weeping and watching.

* * * *

"One short week," she murmured, as she sat by her mother's bedside, anxiously waiting the doctor's arrival; "yes, in one week, my dear grandmother has gone; my father is lost to us! and my mother—Oh, merciful God, spare *her*, leave us not orphans, alone in this weary world."

"Nelly," whispered Tom, "here is Dr. Bright," and in a moment the kind physician was in the room.

"Well, my little nurse," he said cheerily, "how is my patient? carefully attended to I doubt not, and all my directions strictly carried out."

He went up to the bed, and looking earnestly at the sufferer, took her hand and felt the pulse.

"Still high, very high," he said, as he supposed only to himself, but the anxious children of the patient caught the words.

"Don't look so alarmed, my dears, your mother is no worse; indeed, I think I may say, a little better—the breathing is freer and calmer."

"Go in the other room, my dears," he added after a pause; "I want to speak to you both."

They obeyed; and the good doctor gently closed the door behind them.

"Now, listen, children. I have every reason to believe your father is still living, and I hope safe and

well. Every search has been made, and no trace of any kind which could give a different idea, can be found, and I trust that time only is wanted to relieve your anxiety on his account. Your chief attention must therefore be turned to preserving your mother's life, and that I hope to accomplish under God's blessing. But to do that, Nelly, child, you must take care of yourself. I am going to send you to bed while I provide a nurse to sit up with your mother."

"Oh, Doctor, I—"

"Not a word, my dear ; I am king here, and I order you positively to do as I desire. And you, Tom, run up to my house, and ask my daughter for the small case on my study table, and bring it me here."

Tom was gone almost ere the doctor had done speaking, and then the worthy man turned again to his young favourite.

"I shall send for Ann Smith, my dear, and she will attend to your mother for the night. Tomorrow you will be as fresh as a blush rose for your work."

Nelly assented ; indeed she was too worn out to resist, and in less than half an hour she was sleeping the deep slumber of exhaustion and early youth, when no grief can long prevent that blessed

oblivion from sorrow, relieving the over-strained nerves.

Dr. Bright had a double reason for his kind tyranny. He had determined at last to try the effect of bleeding his patient, the crisis of whose attack appeared to be at hand, and he wished to spare Nelly the additional trial of witnessing the operation.

Happily, the somewhat hazardous experiment proved successful. Mrs. Miles's illness took a favourable turn from that night, and though her recovery was slow and tedious, Dr. Bright was ere long able to pronounce her out of danger, and to relieve poor Tom and Nelly's hearts from the apprehension of a yet more dreadful trial than any they had passed through. How true it is that the most effectual and permanent lesson of resignation and cheerfulness under sorrow is taught by the vivid, near approach of some more aggravated and dreaded trouble. It would have been difficult to persuade the two young creatures thus unexpectedly cast on their own strength and prudence, that they could know even contentment while their father's fate was still a mystery. And yet, the dread of losing their beloved mother had so completely swallowed up for the time, that first great sorrow, that when Mrs. Miles began once more to take her place in her old and favourite chair near



the large jessamine-covered window, Nelly felt almost happy, and Tom began to form courageous and honourable plans for the future comfort and maintenance of the two helpless beings, so suddenly left dependent on him for support and care.

The house looked bright and tasteful as before ; the garden and flowers were carefully tended as formerly, the leaves and blossoms which had strewn the path and given so desolate an air to the little domain during the first weeks of sorrow, were swept away, and in all outward respects the Grange had resumed its old aspect of comfort and rustic beauty. Yet, though autumn was rapidly advancing, with its sure and unwelcome decay, nature was still beautiful. The birds were singing merrily, the heath on the moor looked bright, and the lovely, calm, clear river was flowing peacefully and quietly, untroubled, as yet, by storms. Is it not sometimes a mockery of its grief to the heavy, burdened heart, to see the unchanged calmness and unruffled beauty of familiar scenes around ? and yet it is a soothing lesson, if rightly received, of hopes and happiness which will never fade. But, to our tale—

“I shall walk as far as the Grange,” said Dr. Bright to his daughter, after an interval of some days from his last professional visit to Mrs. Miles. “I am anxious to know how they are getting on,

though my patient is nearly out of my hands, I am happy to say."

Taking his hat and cane, the good doctor set off on his benevolent errand; but on arriving at a point of the road, where it branched off in two pretty lanes, one leading to the church, and one to the Grange, his attention was attracted by two figures in the distance walking slowly towards the churchyard, and on looking more earnestly, he perceived his young favourite Nelly and her brother, with baskets on their arms containing flowers.

Dr. Bright guessed their destination; and could not resist the temptation to watch the young creatures in the performance of their sacred duty. So entering the churchyard unseen, he placed himself behind a large tomb, where he could observe them, and hear what took place, unperceived.

They put down their baskets by a newly made grave, and read, with tearful eyes, the inscription on a tombstone, erected that very day above the fresh mound, "Sacred to the memory of Jacob Miles, who departed this life July 9th, 1782, also of Ellen, his wife, who died September 6th, 1792.

"Here they alike in trembling hope repose."—GRAY.

Poor Nelly's firmness gave way at the sight, and she burst into an agony of unrestrained grief.

"Don't, darling Nell," said her brother, affec-

tionately passing his arm round her ; " I know how you loved our dear grandmother ; we all did ; who could help it ? but still, we hope she is in heaven, and we ought not to grieve, but rather to be thankful that she is happy, and that our dear mother is spared to us. I promise you, I will never neglect this grave, when you may be unable to come, in the depth of winter, I will brush away the snow, and put evergreens round the stone ; so don't cry, Nell."

" I know you will," said Nelly, wiping her eyes. " You are my own dear, kind brother, but, oh, Tom, I do wish you were older. What will our dear mother do with the farm now that father is away ? and yet, we cannot do without something to live on, or bear to leave the dear old place."

Tom was silent for a few minutes, and then he spoke with a firm, resolute tone, that showed he had well considered what he had promised to do.

" Well, Nell, I know that I am young, but still I believe that I can manage to take charge of the farm, if Squire Maxwell will trust me, for I have been so much with my father, that I have learnt his plans and ways better than any one else can."

Nelly looked half doubtingly, half admiringly, on her brother's manly, honest face, and then she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him.

" I know you will do your best, dear Tom, and

time will show whether you are equal to it ; and, perhaps — perhaps father may soon come back again."

"Yes, Nell dear, I am sure of it. He cannot be dead, or something would have been found to show it ; and if he is alive I am sure he will come back as soon as he can. And now let us plant the roots, for it will be dark soon."

The brother and sister then began their loving task. They planted the roots, strewed the flowers over the newly-made grave, and then sat down for a few minutes on a neighbouring stone to gaze on their work.

Dr. Bright thought that he had never seen a prettier or more touching sight than those two young creatures, sitting with hands clasped, and faces expressive of deeply-felt, but bravely-borne grief — their heads sheltered from the evening breeze by a large yew tree, its heavy branches almost touching the humble graves—and mingling with the long grass waving to and fro in the wind.

The sun's last beams were just gilding the summit of the Norman tower of the picturesque old church, leaving it wrapped in nature's warm and friendly mantle, as if offering the sacred edifice protection from the rough elements, for does not the ivy always appear to befriend and guard that

which is old and feeble? At that moment the curfew sent forth its warning sound (the ancient custom being still honoured at Dellcombe)—the signal for all birds to take wing. The owls would regularly fly to the summit of the tower at the sound of that evening bell, and mingle their unearthly screams with its solemn notes; and then when it ceased they would return to their old abode and remain unmolested till the following evening.

Dr. Bright left his hiding-place as quietly as he had sought it.

"I will not go to the Grange to-night," he thought; "it is too late."

Perhaps the good doctor felt that its inmates would be better undisturbed on that solemn evening, the commencement, as it were, of a new and important era in the lives of the young son and daughter of that sorrowing and stricken wife, the all but widow of the absent master of the Grange.

CHAPTER II.

THE present "Maxwell, of Dellcombe," was the son of one of the numerous sufferers, from their romantic loyalty to the unfortunate House of Stuart. He was among the number of those who had risked fortune and life for Charles Edward in his last desperate and daring struggle for the crown of his ancestors ; and, like most of that devoted band of adherents to a hopeless cause, he had freely and unrepiningly parted with his whole available property to assist the ill-fated prince, whom he considered the rightful master of him and his, and for whose sake he forgot the claims of those nearest and dearest to him.

A few days after the departure of Charles Edward from the land of his fathers, (never to return,) Mr. Maxwell died, leaving his wife and only son (then a boy of some twelve years of age,) in absolute poverty.

Mrs. Maxwell returned to her father's house, at

Dellcombe, where she and her child were received with open arms by the old Squire. Some few years after, the good old gentleman was gathered to his fathers, leaving his grandson (the present owner of Dellcombe), heir to a moderate, but unincumbered estate. A twelvemonth afterwards, Mrs. Maxwell followed her father to the grave, and her son, after accompanying her remains to Scotland, and laying them by the side of his father, sought consolation for these repeated bereavements, in travel.

He returned after two years' absence, but not alone. When in Frankfort he had seen, wooed, and won, the beautiful daughter of a rich merchant of that city, to whom he was shortly afterwards united.

Of this marriage, the real hero of our story was the sole issue, but if dearly loved, it is but right to say he was not spoiled by either parent. There were, however, hopes and plans for Harry Maxwell's future life which were for the present carefully concealed from their object; and, indeed, at the time when our story opens, the chief attention of both father and son was more engrossed by Mrs. Maxwell's failing health, than by any more distant and uncertain interest. Still, it might be that these very plans had made both parents less quick-sighted than they would otherwise have been, to what was gradually growing up and strengthening beneath

their very eyes. It is so easy to fancy that the schemes and wishes which secretly influence the mind are equally potent and clear to others, that it blinds the eyes to the real state of feeling and springs of action.

Good Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell never doubted that Harry would see with their eyes, all the propriety and advantage of the plan they had laid out for him ; and, perhaps, it was well for all parties that they did not.

The evening after the doctor had witnessed the little scene we have described in the church-yard, he received an invitation to dine at the Manor House, for the purpose of discussing the affairs of the bereaved family at the Grange. The result of a long consultation, was a summons to Tom Miles himself ; despatched by the young heir of the Manor.

“ It is true that Tom is very young,” the doctor had concluded ; “ but he is sharp and intelligent, and has been carefully trained by his poor father. I think, with a little superintendence, he would be able to manage the farm to your satisfaction, Mr. Maxwell.”

“ And I am sure, I am heartily glad for him to try,” returned the squire. “ I promised poor Miles I would befriend his family, if anything happened to him, and there’s no better way of doing so, than

keeping them at the Grange, till he turns up, so long as the land does not go to ruin, which I do not apprehend."

While the seniors were discussing these matters, Harry Maxwell was on his way to the Grange, in the performance of his welcome errand. He was a fine, handsome youth of some twenty years of age, frank, and true-hearted as his father, and inheriting much of his mother's talents and tastes, with a decided and ardent affection for his birth-place, and all connected with it, that almost amounted to a passion, so strong and absorbing was its nature. As he entered the meadow near the house he saw Nelly feeding her pet heifer; but not as before, with bright smiles, and playful jests. The heavy trials that she had undergone had indeed left their traces on that sweet face; the eyes which had formerly sparkled with an actual super-abundance of joyous glee, were now pensive and thoughtful; the bloom on her cheeks was delicate and subdued, giving a different, but yet more winning character to her loveliness. She stood silently watching her heifer taking its evening meal, and Harry gazed for a time in speechless admiration of the picture. A strange gushing, almost painful emotion, rushed into his young heart, which he could scarcely himself comprehend. He had known Nelly Miles all his life, and loved her, as a beautiful

and innocent young sister ; but there was something in the expression of her lovely face and thoughtful attitude which went straight to his heart, and told him that Nelly was now dearer to him than the whole world besides, though he dared not have confessed it, even to himself.

"Miss Miles, Nelly," he said timidly.

The girl started ; and blushed deeply as she saw who was her visitor.

"I fear I startled you," he said, as much confused as herself.

"No, no, no—that is—I did not know anyone was in the meadow, except Diamond and myself. Will you not come in doors?" she added hurriedly.

"I have come from my father in search of your brother Tom," he replied. "Is he in the house?"

"I will see," exclaimed Nelly, glad of the excuse to hurry in-doors, though perfectly bewildered at the extraordinary embarrassment she felt at meeting her old playfellow.

Tom soon made his appearance, and at once prepared to accompany Harry to the Manor House ; and we may as well mention at once, that after a long and satisfactory conversation, it was decided that the youth should have, at any rate, a fair trial, as the manager and virtual tenant of Squire Maxwell's farm, so long occupied by his missing father.

"It is a heavy responsibility for you, my boy,"

said the kind squire ; “ but attention, industry, and goodwill go a great way to make up for experience, and you can always come to me in any difficulty.”

Tom made no protestations, but his modest grateful manner, and quiet “ I will do my best, sir,” were more satisfactory to his kind patrons than more confident assurances.

Autumn had gone, the bright flowers were faded, and the trees were leafless, the abundant harvest had been carefully garnered, the fields ploughed, the land sown, and nature was for a while at rest, so far as outward appearance went, and winter was now far advanced. The moor became impassable, the Dell was rapid and broken in its course. The cattle were in their comfortable sheds, and the birds still nestled under the warm thatched roofed barns.

During these gradual, but sure, changes of the passing seasons, Mrs. Miles continued in the same state of hopeless melancholy in which she had sunk, after her restoration to actual bodily health. She was listless, abstracted, and apparently insensible to the usual interests of her life, or even the affections and exertions of her loving and dutiful children. Dr. Bright frequently visited her, rather as a physician to the mind than the body ; it was consolation and rousing, not medicines, that the sufferer needed.

“ Who knows,” he said one evening, as they sat

over the bright fire at the Grange, "who knows, but that your husband may soon return, or at any rate send tidings of his whereabouts. I have always felt a conviction, Mrs. Miles, that he will come back in health and safety ; and you have really no reason to relinquish hope, as you seem to do. Some trace must have been found had there been any accident or foul play, and ——"

The wife shuddered, but gave no other sign of attention then tapping the floor with her foot, a habit that was now almost a constant one with her.

"Come, come," he said, "try to rouse yourself, and let your husband, when he returns, find his wife, as well as his children and farm, well and prosperous to receive him."

A melancholy shake of the head was the only answer, and Dr. Bright, with a sigh of regret, turned away from the hopeless task of consolation, to the distant corner where Tom was sitting, his account books before him, a pen in his mouth, evidently in a state of hopeless perplexity.

The doctor quietly watched the boy for a time, and then said kindly—

"Well, Tom, what's the matter ; can I give you any assistance ?"

"Why, sir, I don't know whether I am mistaken, but I cannot make Gibson's book correspond with mine."

Dr. Bright drew his chair to the table, and, taking up a pen, prepared to investigate the discrepancy of which the boy complained.

"I should hardly think the mistake was on your side, my lad," he said, "but we will soon see where the error lies."

Dr. Bright was a determined and patient man when he once took up a case, and he went slowly and thoroughly through the tangled accounts. Tom's book was clear and straightforward, but there were entries and discrepancies in Gibson's which puzzled the doctor as much as they did Tom, and he guessed at once that the herdsman was playing his young master false.

"You are right, my boy, there is some foul play here. It appears to me pretty clear that Gibson has been defrauding you, and I'll be even with him yet, or my name is not Charles Bright. Say nothing to him, but bring the next week's account to me—the hypocritical, double-faced villain!"

"I am very glad you have seen the book, Doctor, and it is very kind of you to take such an interest in our affairs. Oh, if I could but see my dear mother better, I should not care for anything, work, nor difficulties, nor hardships. Do you think, Doctor, she will ever be like herself again?"

"I hope she may, dear boy, but I cannot say; God only can comfort the stricken heart, and un-

less we get tidings of your father, there seems but little chance of her recovering her usual health and energy."

"How little I thought," said Tom, "when I saw those rough, hard faces bent on my poor father, that he would be taken from us that very night. I cannot but believe they had something to do with his disappearance. Don't you, Doctor?"

"I do, my boy. There is every reason to suppose they were connected with the mystery. But we can only wait patiently, till some clue is given to the affair, and depend on it, if you do your duty you will be rewarded tenfold, whatever may be the result."

"I wish the frost would break," observed Tom, meditatively, "and then I could get my corn to Rock market; it always fetches the best price there."

"It is not likely it can last much longer, Tom, this is the first of March, you know. And, by the way, I forgot to thank you for the snipes you so kindly sent me yesterday. They were uncommonly fine ones."

"I am glad you like them, Doctor, I will send you some more to-morrow, for I am going out shooting on the moors with Harry Maxwell."

"Take care what you are about, Tom, your life is a precious one just now, and the moors are still

dangerous ; many deep holes are covered with snow, which would give you an ugly fall if you got into them, and most likely some serious injury if you got out again."

"I know the moor well, Doctor—there's no fear, sir. Still I will be careful."

"All right, my boy, and now I'm off; good night."

"I wish, Tom, you had not made that appointment with Harry Maxwell this morning," said Nelly, as they sat at breakfast. Her blue eyes had been for some time fixed anxiously on her brother, and her breakfast remained untouched before her; but Tom had been too busy with his gun, to have remarked her wistful, troubled look.

"Why, Nell, what's the harm? I only wish I could get this trigger to pull more easy; it's as hard as the frost."

"I hardly know why; but I feel uneasy, dear. I suppose it's what the doctor said last night, that frightened me."

"Then I won't go, Nell, I don't want to vex you, little sister, you've enough trouble without that."

"But Harry would be vexed," said the girl, doubtfully.

"I suppose he would be disappointed, but still, if you wish it, I will soon tell him I cannot go."

"No, no, dear Tom, I won't be so silly; but only promise me to get back as soon as you can."

"Yes, Nell, I'll come back before tea time, I can't promise more than that."

"Nelly," said a feeble voice from the adjoining room, "where is Tom going?"

"With Henry Maxwell, dear mother: he appointed to go out shooting with him this morning."

"I don't like it," said the invalid; "but still, if it's Harry, he must go: we can't offend the Squire, you know, and your poor father away. Ah! Nelly, will he ever come again?"

"Please God, he will, mother: only try and keep up for all our sakes."

"Good-bye, mother, good-bye, Nell, I'm off, and I'll bring you a pheasant for supper. Don't fret while I'm away, you silly little thing."

Nelly tried to smile, but the tears came in her eyes, and she was obliged to make some excuse for leaving the room, lest her mother should observe her emotion.

Hours passed on: three, four o'clock came. The tea table was spread, some ham and eggs ready for the young sportsman on his return, and Nelly sat anxiously at the window, watching for the first glimpse of her brother's form.

"Oh, how late it is, it will be getting twilight

presently: why does not Tom come? he cannot be shooting all this time."

She went to the door, ran to the garden gate, then mounted on the first branches of a tree to command the most distant view of the road by which Tom must come, but nothing could be seen.

She returned to the house, and again resumed her watch, but too restless and uneasy to sit still in any place, she stole quietly into her mother's room, hoping that she might still be sleeping.

"How the wind blows, Nelly. Bring your chair close, and give me your hand. I want to talk to you. Do you know, I have had such a beautiful dream about your dear father."

"Have you, dearest mother? what was it?" said Nelly, thankful that her mother's mind should be so occupied.

"I saw your father, Nelly. He had the same sad, troubled look as he had the last night he was here: and then he seemed to see me, and his face changed, and he looked so bright and pleasant, and he said, 'I shan't be gone long, dear wife,' just as he did when he went away. Don't you think it a good omen, Nelly?"

"I hope so, darling mother."

Nelly nestled closer to the invalid, and placing her cheek against hers, gradually soothed her off to sleep again. She dared not tell the feeble invalid

that Tom had not returned, and was inexpressibly thankful to find that she seemed to have forgotten his absence for the time. When Mrs. Miles was again soundly sleeping, Nelly stole away, and resumed her anxious watch at the window. It was nearly dark, and each moment served to increase her apprehensions for Tom's safety.

"Oh, my brother! my dear, dear brother!" she murmured, "if anything has happened to you, what will become of us. We should die. We could not bear such a terrible grief after what we have suffered." At that moment she heard Ponto's bark. She did not discern any object in the distance, nor hear the least sound in the thick haze, but still the dog's voice was a true sign of something approaching, and her heart beat so violently that she could not move from the spot.

"Ponto never barks when Tom is there—what does it mean? There is something dreadful happened."

Such were poor Nelly's thoughts, but she was spell bound to her chair till the house door gently opened, and a step slowly approached. She hastened to the door, expecting to rush into her brother's arms, but the pale, sorrowful face of Henry Maxwell met her gaze. It was enough, she needed no further explanation; the shock following the intense agitation of the last two hours was too



much for her nerves; she looked wildly round, caught sight of two men entering the house carrying a form carefully on a rough plank. One wild low scream and she sank senseless on the ground. Harry sprang forward and raised her in his arms, calling fondly on her by every endearing name he could imagine, his long restrained feelings venting themselves in irrepressible tenderness at the sight of her distress. Either the tones of his voice, or the tears which dropped on her pale cheek, recalled Nelly to some degree of consciousness. She was half sensible of a light pressure of warm lips on the forehead as Harry laid her tenderly on the sofa, and then, hastily closing the door of the room, he went to prevent any further shock to the agitated girl, and to guide Tom's bearers to the chamber occupied by the young sufferer.

"Will Dr. Bright never come," exclaimed poor Harry, in agony, as he saw his friend's apparently lifeless form laid on the bed. "Oh! I shall never, never forgive myself."

"What's the matter?—what fool's work have you been up to now?" asked a gruff, but kindly voice, and Harry, turning from the bed, saw, to his inexpressible relief, the good physician standing and gazing at the group.

"Oh, sir! I am so glad you are come—is he

dead? will he recover? Oh, Dr. Bright, if you do not save him I shall go mad."

"Pooh, pooh, don't talk nonsense, boy, there, go and send Ann to me, and little Nelly must see to her mother, and keep her from any suspicion of the truth."

"Nelly, Miss Miles is very ill, sir; she has fainted with the fright of seeing her brother brought into the house. Unluckily she was at the window."

"All alike, women are such fools," grumbled the doctor, who was now examining Tom's wound. "Well, well, I'll see to her presently, but make haste and send Ann up stairs. She's worth a dozen of you, Master Harry."

Harry obeyed, and then went timidly to the door of the room, where he had left Nelly; he tapped, then opened it cautiously, and to his great comfort, saw that she was fast reviving; her eyes were open, and a faint colour had returned to her pale lips. She started upon seeing Harry, but was fain to lie down again from the increasing feeling of faintness, which seized her, at the slight exertion.

"Tom—my brother—is he, is he?" she gasped.

"Dear Nelly, do not look so wretched, or you will drive me wild," exclaimed Harry, kneeling down by her. "It is I who am the unhappy cause of your sorrow, and after all you have suffered; oh,

Nelly, forgive me, for I am very wretched," and he hid his face in his hands. Nelly's tender, unselfish nature was touched at once by the sight of another's distress, especially when that other was Harry Maxwell.

"Do not blame yourself so bitterly, Mr. Maxwell," she said, laying her hand on that which covered poor Harry's face, and gently removing it. "Only tell me, is he dead?"

"God forbid, Nelly! Dr. Bright is with him, and we shall soon know the worst; but, I think, I hope, the wound was only in the arm."

"What wound?" asked Nelly, shuddering.

"It was my gun, Nelly; your brother was going to carry the birds I had shot, and—and my gun went off. Oh, do not hate me."

Nelly's soft blue eyes were bent on Harry's agitated face; their expression was certainly anything but one of hate, and the young man's heart throbbed violently, as he felt her small hand tremble in his.

"Dear, dear Nelly," he whispered, "you are an angel of goodness, not to send me from you in horror; and yet, I would have suffered twice what Tom does to save him, to save you, this pain."

Nelly's white cheek crimsoned; a strange feeling came over her which she did not comprehend, and yet which instinctively made her feel anxious to

put an end to the little scene. It was so pleasant, and yet so terrifying, that novel, agitating confusion of heart and brain, which the first hesitation of mutual love brings with it to the young, inexperienced girl, unversed in hackneyed romance and fiction.

"I—I must go, my mother wants me," she said, trying to hear.

"Not yet, Nelly, wait till we hear something more. I will go and see what Dr. Bright says,—and you must keep still; you are not fit to see your mother yet."

Nelly's own feelings told her that she might do more harm than good, by going to her mother in her present, agitated, trembling state; and she perforce obeyed Harry's commands, by reclining once more on the sofa pillows, and striving bravely to conquer the weakness which would, she knew, render her worse than useless to those she loved best.

A few minutes, which appeared hours to poor Nelly, elapsed before Harry returned, followed by Dr. Bright. A glance at the face of the latter brought comfort to the girl's heart. There was no sign of what she dreaded most in that kind smile, and half-impatient, half-sympathizing tone.

"Well, my child," he said, "you are better already, I see, without my doctoring; silly little

thing that you are, not to wait to see what was the matter, before you put yourself in a fright. There, there ; don't cry, Tom will do well enough, it's only a flesh wound, and I have extracted the shot too ; if he's kept quiet, there is little danger."

" Oh, doctor, how can I thank you !" exclaimed Nelly ; " but you are quite, quite sure ?"

" As sure as it is possible to be, child ; but all depends on good nursing and quiet, and you must not go near him with that white face and shaking hands—there—take that."

And the good man poured the contents of a bottle which he took from his pocket into a glass which he insisted on Nelly's swallowing.

" There—that will revive you, and now, you lie down for half-an-hour, while Ann sits with your brother ; I'll go and tell Mrs. Miles, and prevent her being alarmed ; and you, Master Harry, be off with you, you will only do mischief here, and your mother is anxious for your return. I have just left her, not at all well, I am sorry to say."

" But, doctor, only just hear me. I want to tell you how this happened, it will ease my heart !" exclaimed Harry, as he obeyed the doctor's orders, and accompanied him from the room.

The facts which Harry poured out, mingled with self-reproaches and lamentations, were simply these—

Finding but little sport by the river, the two youths had gone to the moor, where they were rather more successful. They were just preparing to return home, after some hours' enjoyment, when Tom begged to carry Harry Maxwell's birds, thinking himself far stronger than the more slenderly formed squire's son. In taking them from his friend's shoulder, Harry's gun went off, and its contents lodged themselves in the poor youth's arm. The loss of blood and fright, following the morning's fatigue on the snow-covered moor, were too much for Tom's strength ; he staggered a few steps ; tried to smile and make light of the pain, and then, to Harry's horror, fell lifeless on the ground. Fortunately they were near a peat-covered cottage, one of the few scattered over that wild moor, and hither, Harry managed by an exertion of his utmost strength, to carry the helpless form of his friend. They washed and bound up the wound, and then the tenant of the cottage and his son, directed by Harry, proceeded to place the sufferer on a plank, and carried him slowly and carefully to Dr. Bright's house. But the doctor was absent, summoned, as his daughter said, to the Manor House, and the only feasible plan, after consultation between Harry and Miss Bright, was to convey poor Tom to the Grange, while a messenger was sent off for the doctor.

Poor Harry's feelings may be better imagined

than described, as he approached the house, and knew that he was taking grief and misery to her, who he had long secretly idolized as the fairest object in the world.

It may be well supposed, therefore, that when he witnessed Nelly's agitation, his love got the better of prudence, and induced the partial betrayal of what he had intended scrupulously to conceal.

"Well, Harry, I do not see that you were to blame, except in carrying your gun loaded, and that is a practice which cannot be too strongly condemned; however, it will be a lesson for you both, not to be so rash and careless for the future, and, luckily, there is no irremediable mischief done."

"But, doctor, will you grant me one favour?"

"What is it?"

"Let me stay and nurse Tom, at any rate for to-night. I am sure my father would not object, when he hears the truth?"

"No, my boy, not yet. He must be watched for the present by more experienced eyes than yours; and, besides, your mother wants you more than he does. So be off, and you can come again in the morning if you like; and—Harry—call at Nurse Allen's, if you will, as you pass, and send her up. Ann will be wanted, now Mrs. Miles and Nelly are both laid up."

Harry reluctantly departed, and the doctor re-

turned once more to his patient, who he found in a quiet sleep. After seeing Mrs. Miles, and giving her a softened account of the accident, he also left the Grange, and took his way slowly back to his own house.

"Now," he thought, "I see how it is—very bad—very bad; and yet I don't wonder at it. All the fault of the parents; and then I suppose it will be the old story. However, it can't be helped now, and she's a sweet little thing that's certain."

If the good doctor could have looked into Harry's heart, and known his dreams that night, he would have felt even more convinced that his penetration had not been at fault. The high-born Squire's son knew at that memorable moment when he clasped the farmer's beautiful daughter in his arms, that he loved—loved for the first—and the last time.

CHAPTER III.

NELLY MILES was again standing at the rustic porch of the Grange, but with far different looks and feelings to that sad night, when she had watched and waited for the long absent Tom. Her eyes were, as then, anxiously turned to the garden-gate, and her ears strained for the sound of approaching footsteps. But her fair face was blooming with happy expectation, instead of pale with anxious terror, and her eyes were now sparkling with eagerness—now downcast with timid consciousness of her inward emotion.

Yes, it was a lover, though as yet an unacknowledged one, that Nelly was expecting, and whose daily visits were the sunshine of her existence. Since Tom's accident, Harry Maxwell had been both a faithful and constant attendant on the sick chamber of his friend, and a most valuable substitute in the duties from which the young farmer was laid aside.

He had reported to Tom every evening what had been done during the day, and so far as he could, the state of the various operations going on in the different parts of the domain ; and would say with a smile, that embellished yet more his handsome face :

“ I am come for my orders for to-morrow, Mr. Tom Miles.”

Thanks to this zeal and readiness to carry out Tom's more experienced directions, the Grange farm did not suffer as it otherwise would have done from the absence of its young master ; and the patient's recovery was materially hastened by Harry's cheerful society, and able assistance.

“ Well, Nelly, how is Tom to-night ?” said Harry, as he bounded up the steps to the porch, while the girl strove to appear indifferent and pre-occupied as he approached, but betrayed her secret too effectually for concealment, in her trembling hand and flushed cheek.

“ Better, thank you, Mr. Maxwell ; I hope he will soon be downstairs and out again.”

“ Do not call me Mr. Maxwell ; you never used to do, Nelly.”

“ But we are older now,” said the girl, shyly.

“ Am I to call you Miss Miles, then ? I will, if you won't say Harry,” said the young man, looking earnestly in the downcast eyes.

"Well, well, Harry, then," murmured Nelly, and there was a slight pause.

"But I am afraid you give us too much of your time," returned Nelly, after an effort to regain an indifferent tone. "Your father and mother must miss you sadly. I am afraid they will not like you to be away so much."

"They would say I am quite right: but as it happens my father has an old friend staying with him, and my mother is ordered to keep her room, and be very quiet just now, and even I am only admitted occasionally."

"I am so grieved," said Nelly, tears springing to her eyes. "I wish I could be spared to nurse her—if she would let me, at least."

"She would like no one so well, Nelly. She loves you like a daughter."

Nelly coloured, and again there was silence.

"I wonder there is so much sorrow in the world," said Harry, musingly. "It is all so beautiful, and it seems as if we all might be so happy, if things were but a little different."

"And are you not happy, Harry?"

Nelly's tone was unconsciously tender, and it went to her lover's heart. He tried to take her hand, but she shyly withdrew it after a momentary pressure.

"I ought not to be otherwise, perhaps," he re-

plied, "when I have so many blessings, and yet, besides my poor mother's state of health, there are fears and anxieties which sometimes trouble me. And you—you are far more heavily tried. Oh, Nelly, how I wish I could share your burdens, or take them entirely from you."

"It is my duty to bear them patiently, Harry, and to be thankful that Tom and my dear mother are still spared to me. You know my mother has no one to support and take care of her now, but her little daughter."

"A little angel, you mean."

"No, no, no. I am not in the least like an angel," said Nelly, trying to laugh off her confusion.

"You are the best and loveliest of human beings, Nelly."

"Hush, hush, Harry. You must not speak so; it is wrong of me to listen to such words, and you must not—indeed you must not tempt me to it," she said, innocently betraying her own weakness by her remonstrance, and looking up so pleadingly as almost to ruin any possible effect of her request.

"I will obey you—at present, Nelly," he said, his generous nature respecting her position too much to take advantage of her youth and guilelessness by drawing her to a confession of her feelings. "And now, let us go to Tom. I suppose he is expecting me."

"Yes. Have you brought Gibson's book, as he requested?"

"No, Dr. Bright told me to give it to him: he did not wish Tom disturbed with such matters at present."

The young people now repaired to the sick room, and for the next hour or two the conversation turned on more practical and every-day topics.

As Harry returned home that evening, he stopped at the gate which opened on the meadow before the farmhouse, and watched the light in Nelly's bedroom window, and the loved form flitting from time to time across its beams.

And as he stood, anxious and troubled thoughts rushed into his mind, which his late dialogue with the young girl had perhaps conjured up.

"What will be the end of all this?" he thought; "what will be the result of my love? Nelly, darling Nelly, my own love, surely it cannot be wrong for me to feel thus for you, to vow that no power on earth shall separate us. Why should I not marry one so lovely and so good?"

As he murmured these words, the moon, which had been shining brightly, was suddenly overcast. "It is a bad omen," he said, "will my hopes be darkened like that beautiful orb, which looks down on me so calmly?"

As Harry spoke, the cloud passed away from the

face of the lovely queen of night, and the young lover's heart drew comfort from the fanciful coincidence. "Ah! she has conquered the gloom, and looks more bright and beautiful than ever. Pray God that it may be an emblem of the patience and constancy which shall conquer all obstacles to our love!"

And the young man resumed his way to the Manor House, graver, but not sadder for the meditation into which he had involuntarily been led. He was both wiser and better for the life's lessons of the last few weeks.

Days lengthened into weeks, and Harry Maxwell's attention and thoughts were somewhat diverted, even from Nelly Miles, by the fast increasing weakness of his beloved mother. Mrs. Maxwell was evidently fading fast, and her husband and son watched her gentle, but sure decay with troubled hearts, though they strove hard, for her sake, to conceal the alarm and anguish they could so ill endure.

"Mother," said Harry one day, "would you not like to see Miss Miles? she has not been to the Manor for a long, long time."

"Nelly!" said the invalid faintly, "poor child, yes, it is long since I have seen her; she has other duties now, my son."

"But it is not that which prevents her coming

here, dear mother ; I do not think she likes to intrude on your sick room, without your sending for her."

Mrs. Maxwell was silent, her eyes were fixed on the ingenuous face of her son, whose cheeks crimsoned involuntarily under her gaze.

"Harry, my boy," she said, "did Nelly tell you this?"

"No, mother, but she often speaks of you with such affection, and I know she longs to see you, and try to do something in return for your kindness to her ; and now Mrs. Miles and Tom are better, of course her time is less occupied at the Grange."

"Kindness, my kindness," repeated the lady, musingly. "It was meant in love, God grant that it may turn out to be so, poor dear child ! that I have not caused misery rather than good."

"What do you mean, dear mother?" asked Harry, anxiously.

"Nothing, my love ; it was a passing thought. Who can tell in this world the result of the best meant efforts for the good of others?"

"I cannot understand you, mother," said Harry, a little impatiently. The idea of any evil arising from Mrs. Maxwell's kindness to his darling Nelly, was a tantalizing and annoying enigma to him.

"Never mind, my dear boy, I trust you never will. But, Harry, listen to me."

The youth drew nearer to his mother's couch, and placed himself on a low ottoman at her side; her hand rested fondly on his head, and played with the rich brown curls she had so often arranged in his boyhood. "My son, I shall not be long with you: it is useless to hide or deny it. I am declining fast, and I want you to promise me one thing."

"Anything that can comfort you, darling mother," said the youth, swallowing the emotion, which nearly choked his utterance.

"Never leave your father, Harry, nor act contrary to his wishes. He is so good, so fond of you, dear boy; he would never willingly cross your inclinations. Try to obey and please him, Harry, even at some little sacrifice to yourself; you will be all he has left in the world. Will you do this?"

"I will, mother. Do not fear me."

Mrs. Maxwell smiled contentedly.

"Bless you, my boy, that is enough. I know you will keep your word. Now read to me a little."

Harry got a favourite volume of an old divine, and read in a low tone, till his mother fell asleep, and then he sat and thought gravely of the promise he had made. Would it affect his conduct where Nelly was concerned. It was an anxious

question, but the hopefulness of his age and nature .
settled it the way he wished, and he soon began to
make plans for the future, in which both his father
and Nelly were included.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT season of the year can be compared to spring? bright beautiful spring bringing with it hope and new life, with its sunshine and warmth, decking trees and hedges in their rich foliage; every thing, every creature, rejoices in its return. The cows luxuriate in the golden meadows; the sweet flowers waft their delicious odour through the balmy air; the flocks and herds are once more let loose to wander at pleasure over hill and dale, in search of their favourite food. All nature seems to contribute to man's enjoyment of the delicious season; the blackbird's song wakens him to renewed life in the early morn, and the nightingale soothes him to rest with his soft nocturnal melody. Spring is the proverbial and appropriate season for fresh early love, and it might be that its influence was to blame for the conquest of all Harry Maxwell's prudent resolutions, and that he could not resist the softening atmosphere of all around. The



words so long on his heart had been spoken by his lips, and Nelly Miles was now—though in secret—his betrothed ; but let not our young lovers be too much blamed. The sorrow hanging over both their families, their constant companionship and extreme youth, might well plead their excuse for not openly acknowledging, and asking parental sanction to their attachment. Many sweet, happy hours did they enjoy together, seated in an old rustic arbour, by the river side, watching its clear water dash gracefully and sparkingly over small heaps of detached stones, which obstructed its course, and glittered in the sunshine like drops of crystal.

“ How lovely and quiet it is this evening,” said Nelly, on one of these happy interviews. “ How different it would be without you, Harry. Even a day appears an age without seeing you. What should I do if we were separated ?”

“ Do not talk of separation, Nelly ; may that day never come, for I could not live without you ; I never knew true happiness till now.”

“ It is very sweet to hear you say so ; you will never love me less, will you ?”

“ Never—never—till my last hour,” he replied, fervently kissing her blushing cheek, “ you will never doubt me, Nelly ?”

The girl raised her blue eyes to his, it was

answer enough, and they sat in thoughtful silence for some minutes.

"Shall we go down to the river to meet Tom?" said Nelly at last; "he said he should fish this evening, and it is almost time to go in."

They went slowly to the bank, but no Tom was there; and after lingering for some time, they returned to the Grange.

"Where is Tom, mother?" asked Nelly, anxiously.

"I am not quite sure, my dear—but I fancy he is gone to see Dr. Bright," replied Mrs. Miles, looking up from her knitting. The bereaved wife, like all other objects, animate or inanimate, seemed to feel the gladdening influence of Spring, and she looked, and spoke more cheerfully than her children had dared to hope she would do again, till their father's return.

"Do you know whether Gibson has left the village?" asked Harry of the young girl.

"I hope he has, Harry—Dr. Bright openly charged him with dishonesty."

"And what did he say?"

"Denied it entirely, and swore he would be revenged for the loss of his place in some way. Oh, I wish he had left Dellcombe."

"I scarcely see how he can injure you, dearest,

do not torment yourself uselessly," he said, soothingly.

"Who can tell, Harry, I trust not, but I am sadly afraid of him."

The curfew bell now startled them from their quiet forgetfulness of all around.

"Mother, had you not better go indoors, you may take cold, as you are not strong yet."

"I will, my love, but you need not come with me, the evening is delicious, and I remember how I enjoyed these nights, at your age."

The young people were certainly nothing loth, and they lingered in the porch, watching the sun disappear behind the old church tower, and happy in the feeling that they were together, though few words passed between them.

Dellcombe church—as we said—was noted for its antiquity and beauty throughout the county, and the cedars, which stood near it, were believed to be ancient as the church itself; while a stately avenue of yew trees formed the shady approach to the sacred edifice.

As our lovers were taking their last farewell a sudden light broke over the village.

Nelly started. "Look—look—Harry, what is that light yonder? where does it come from? it is something very strange."

"Wait here, Nelly, do not say anything to your mother, I will be back directly."

He bounded off, and in a few moments returned pale and agitated.

"Speak, Harry; what is it? do not keep me in suspense, I can bear anything but that."

"Dearest, compose yourself, I trust all will be well, but some of the ricks are on fire."

"Oh, Harry, what shall we do?"

"Hush, love, do not leave the garden, keep quiet, and above all keep it from your mother."

"But Tom—oh, where is Tom," she said, piteously.

"He will be here shortly; the whole village is astir, and we will soon have the flames under; but I must not stay. Remember your promise, Nelly, you will stay here till I return."

"I will, dear."

He kissed her, and darted off like an arrow. By the time he had arrived at the scene of the calamity, a little crowd were standing near, anxious and willing to render assistance, but wanting some master-spirit to guide them.

"Is Mr. Miles here?" demanded Harry.

"No, sir; I saw him with Dr. Bright about an hour ago," replied one of the bystanders.

"Then obey my orders; quick."

And then, with wonderful coolness and self-

possession, Harry assigned to each their duties ; some to fetch water from the river, which happily was near, and others to stand in constant readiness to deluge the burning ricks. A little longer, and not only all the stacks which stood close by the burning ricks, but the adjacent barns and sheds, would have fallen a sacrifice to the flames. Harry's orders were promptly and zealously obeyed ; men and boys were all anxious to lend their aid to the widow and her orphans ; and after an anxious and fatiguing hour of suspense and alarm, their labours were rewarded by success, and the fire got under without spreading to any but the two ricks originally in flames.

After thanking his humble friends, and desiring them to refresh themselves at his expense at the neighbouring village inn, Harry returned to set Nelly's heart at rest.

The girl was standing at the gate, pale and trembling, but true to her promise.

"Do not look so frightened, love ; the danger is over, and the fire extinguished, with comparatively little damage. How thankful I am I was here, or it might have been far worse."

"You are always our good angel, dear Harry."

"Then go in, my darling ; say nothing to your mother, but go quietly to bed, and do not wait for Tom ; he will, perhaps, be late, and to-morrow we

can investigate the matter, for it is evidently not a mere accident. Good night, Nelly ; God bless and keep you."

A close and searching inquiry was made into the author of this deed, and suspicion at once fell upon Gibson. He had been seen lurking near the spot about an hour before the breaking out of the fire; and when he was found lying outside a tavern, about a mile distant, was in a state of stupid intoxication. A box of matches, proved to have been in his possession, and a pocket handkerchief, also known to be his, were found near the ricks ; and it was known that he had more than once vowed vengeance for his dismissal. He was accordingly committed, and the assizes being at hand, he was very soon tried, condemned, and sentenced to ten years' transportation.

Tom had been absent on the day of the trial, giving his evidence, and returned late at night, looking pale and sad.

"Dear brother, what has happened? you look ill and sorrowful," said Nelly, affectionately bringing him his slippers, and hastening to get him some refreshment.

"Nothing, Nelly ; only I cannot help feeling for Gibson, bad as he is. No doubt he tried to do us all the harm he could, but still, if I had had any idea he would have been sentenced to ten years



transportation, I doubt whether I should have been induced to prosecute him."

"I am as grieved for him as you are, Tom, and I love you for being so kind and good, but still he did deserve some punishment. If the farm had been burnt down what would have become of us; it is our only support, you know."

"If it had been so, Nelly, neither you nor my mother should ever have wanted. I have youth, health, and strength, and I would have worked early and late for you both, and only thought it my greatest pleasure."

Mrs. Miles had been silently listening to this little dialogue, though apparently engaged in reading.

"My noble boy! my own dear son!" she said, throwing her arms round his neck, and bursting into tears, "if I have been bereaved of my dear husband, God has left me the blessing of good, dutiful children in my widowhood, and I humbly thank him for it."

"Do not call yourself a widow, dear mother," said Tom, cheerfully, "you must not be so desponding. I am sure my father will come back."

"Never, my boy! I have given up all hope now."

"But you must not, mother, for I have dreamt several nights past that I saw the postman coming

over the meadows holding a letter in his hand, and that letter was from my father," said Nelly.

"But that was but a dream, my poor dear child."

"Perhaps so, but it was a good omen, was it not, Tom?"

"Oh, yes. I feel confident all will be right some day."

And the two young creatures tried to divert their mother's mind to other topics, and to restore her to cheerfulness before retiring to rest.

When the brother and sister were alone, Nelly hoped to hear some news of Harry, who had not been to the Grange for several days. At last, finding Tom did not volunteer any information, she asked timidly :

"Tom, was Mr. Maxwell one of the magistrates who committed Gibson last week?"

"Yes; and I was rather surprised that Harry was not in the court to-day."

Nelly was still more surprised that he had not been at the Grange; but she said merely :

"I hope, Tom, there is nothing wrong at the Manor?"

"Why should you think so, Nelly?"

Nelly hesitated.

"Oh, only—Mrs. Maxwell is so ill, and—and

—Harry would naturally have gone to the trial to-day, if all were well at home.”

Tom made no reply, but when Nelly appeared at breakfast next morning with heavy eyes and pale cheeks, he began to combine the two circumstances and drew his own conclusions. He was by no means quick-sighted, but the truth now slowly dawned on him.

“There is something wrong with Nelly,” he thought; “I never saw her like this before. I suppose she loves Harry; and if so, I hope he loves her. How can he help it? Who could know her without loving her; and I can’t see there would be any harm in it then.”

Days went on, and still Harry did not appear as usual, and the loveliness of the fast approaching summer was sadly lost on poor Nelly. Haymaking was at hand, the whole village was astir, and Tom too engrossed with the importance of the moment to have time to notice his sister’s dejection. And Nelly strove to smile, and appear contented and happy as usual, but her heart was heavy and foreboding.

Had Harry changed? had his parents forbidden his coming? should they indeed be parted for ever? Such were the questions which continually haunted her, and poisoned her very source of happiness. Her nights were nearly sleepless, and

nothing but the excitement and pre-occupation of the season could have prevented the change in her sweet face from being noticed by her mother and brother. And still Harry came not, nor did she hear any tidings of him, for, as it happened, Dr. Bright was much occupied with some distant patients, and did not find leisure for his usual visits to the Grange, where his professional skill was no longer needed by Mrs. Miles.

The day had been intensely hot, and every exertion had been made to get in as much hay as possible before night, as there were indications of a coming storm. Waggon's of the sweet-scented new mown hay had been constantly going to and fro, between the fields and the ricks, and Tom had determined to continue labour as late as possible to complete the work. Nelly and her mother had returned from the scene of action early, as Mrs. Miles could not bear the heat and fatigue, and after much persuasion had been induced to retire to bed, while Nelly prepared supper for her wearied brother with her own hands. She had finished her task, and stood watching for Tom's return. The moon was high in the heavens, shedding a full flood of light on the lovely scene below, and Nelly would have enjoyed that quiet peaceful hour, had not her heart been so sad, at the absence of one who could alone make each scene



doubly beautiful and happy to her. She heard the gate open, and supposing it was Tom, she went forward to meet him.

"Nelly," said a well known voice, "darling Nelly!"

"Oh, Harry, I did not expect you—I—I did not know whether—"

"Whether I should come again, love; I am not surprised, but, do not be severe on me, this long separation has been more keenly felt by me, than it can have been by you—I—oh—dear me, I am in heavy grief, sorrow has come to me now, Nelly."

"Oh, Harry—forgive me—I did not mean to reproach you, but I have been so unhappy. But I shall forget all I have suffered in the joy of seeing you again."

Harry clasped her in his arms, but a tear fell on her face as he kissed her up-turned brow.

"Nelly, darling, comfort me, for I am in great sorrow; my mother is dying."

She staggered, and would have fallen had not Harry caught her in his arms. For some moments he thought she had fainted, so marble-like and icy was her white face, and cold hands. The truth was, her nerves had been so much shaken of late that she could ill bear any sudden shock, and

the news of her kind and dearly loved friend's danger had completely overpowered her.

"Dearest, what have I done, how selfish I have been," exclaimed Harry, clasping her close to him. "Oh, Nelly, speak to me, I was terribly thoughtless to tell you so abruptly."

A tear stole down Nelly's cheek, her numbed faculties were returning.

"Oh, Harry, forgive me. I wonder you can have patience with a weak, silly girl. I ought to comfort you, not give you fresh anxiety."

"It was my fault, Nelly, and I hate myself for my inconsiderateness. But you are better now."

"Yes, quite well, tell me all; I am strong enough to hear all your troubles, and it is my happiness to comfort you."

"Well, then, dear, you know how ill my dear mother has been for a long time, but she was so patient, and it seemed as if it was only weakness, which would only want care to rally from. But oh, Nelly, there is no hope now, her disease is one that never can be cured; she became worse some days ago, and ever since, her life has hung on a thread. It is consumption, Nelly; and who knows but that I inherit her malady?"

"Oh, no, no, Harry, do not add to this grief, by imagining anything so fearful; your dear mother has always been delicate, and you are strong and



robust. It would kill me to think of such a thing."

"Well, darling, do not speak of it, I seem only to grieve you to-night; yet it is a comfort to tell you my sorrows."

The young man gave way at last to the grief which had been so long pent up, and wept like a child for some moments.

Nelly soothed and caressed him, and at last he became calmer, and able to return to his melancholy duties.

"I must go now, darling, I shall watch in my mother's room to-night. You will pray for me, Nelly."

"Yes, dear Harry, God comfort you, as He did us. Do not think about me, you must not leave your poor mother on my account. I shall not expect to see you till—till—"

"All is over, Nelly."

"Or she is better, Harry. Nothing is impossible with God."

"I know it, dear girl, we pray fervently that her life may be spared, but I cannot venture to hope. I shall obey you, dear one."

"Not obey *me*, but your own loving, dutiful heart, Harry; and now, good-night."

One fond embrace, and he was gone. Scarcely had his footsteps died away in the distance, when



Tom entered the garden, looking weary and exhausted.

"Why, Nell, how is it you are here at this hour?"

"I was watching for you, Tom."

"Just like my dear, kind little sister; now come in."

Nelly waited till Tom had taken some supper, and then she told him of Harry's visit, and the sad news he had brought, and the brother and sister sympathised warmly in a trial they had so recently feared for themselves.

Three weeks passed slowly away. Still the Manor House wore its usual cheerful appearance without; but within, all was hushed in profound and ominous quietude. The servants passed noiselessly from room to room, speaking in whispers, and the whole household wore an aspect of subdued and noiseless grief, more expressive of woe than the loudest lamentations. It was morning—but the sun was excluded by the heavy folds of the rich damask curtains from the library, where two persons were sleeping. On a sofa lay Mr. Maxwell, his face looked worn and haggard, and his sleep was troubled and broken by frequent starts, and from time to time he would murmur out—"who's there?"—"I'm coming;" then, finding no reply, he would sink again into

slumber. Harry reclined in an arm-chair; his sleep was more deep and quiet than his father's; it is the privilege and necessity of youth. Both the wearied ones had been watching by the invalid's bedside till five o'clock that morning, when Dr. Bright arrived, and insisted on their taking some rest, promising them that they should be summoned if any change took place, or if the sufferer woke from the tranquil sleep in which she appeared to have fallen. They had reluctantly submitted to this kind peremptoriness, and going into the library, had rested as we have described, till mid-day, when the door softly opened and the doctor entered. His face was grave, and though he cautiously waited for the full return of consciousness of the slumberers before speaking his errand, they guessed but too well, that his tidings were evil ones.

"She still sleeps," he said, "but the pulse is nearly gone, and a coldness is coming over the limbs. The end is approaching; remember, perfect calmness, Harry. My dear sir, take my arm; it is a bitter trial for you, I know."

They silently proceeded to the sick room, and sat in speechless grief for a time, watching the death-like slumber, and praying that she might have one moment of consciousness to speak to them once more, and bid "farewell" on earth to those she loved so well.

But it was not to be. Dr. Bright, whose hand had been resting on the pulse, suddenly withdrew it, and taking a small glass, held it to the pale lips. It was stainless when he withdrew it. The gentle spirit had passed away in sleep, as calmly and painlessly as her loving ones could have wished, and returned to Him who gave it.

Harry behaved nobly. He restrained his own heart-rending grief to comfort his stricken father, and leading him from the chamber of death, implored him to control his violent emotion. But Mr. Maxwell was for a time in utter despair, and totally unable to listen to consolation or remonstrance. At last, some two days after the death of his beloved wife, Harry succeeded in inducing him to leave the gloomy mansion, and take a turn in the shady avenue, immediately before the house. The peaceful evening, the soft air, the tranquil sky—seemed to calm the mourner's grief, and he began to speak more quietly and collectedly of the present and future than he had yet done. He expressed some wishes as to the funeral, and then went on to say—

“ When all is over, Harry, we will leave this sad spot, and try to seek some respite from suffering in change of scene. I think we will go and visit your dear mother's birth-place; your grandfather has

long wished to see you. Shall you not like it, Harry?"

A sudden pang darting through the youth's heart, betrayed itself in his changing face.

"Are you not well, my son? what is the matter?" said the alarmed father.

"Oh, yes, quite well, my dear father. I am only a little tired. We will talk of this afterwards; now, had we not better go in?"

CHAPTER V.

"WELL, I think you may begin," said Tom, surveying proudly the beautiful and gladdening fields with their majestic and full golden ears of corn, waving gracefully in the morning breeze, tempting, and yet forbidding the ready sickle of the reapers as they stood ready to deface the symmetry of that landscape.

The first day of reaping is a proud and joyous one for the farmer, especially when his long watching and care is repaid by a profitable and abundant reward.

The young master of the Grange was, indeed, most thankful and proud as he surveyed his crops, and saw Heaven's sunshine smiling on that abundant harvest which was vouchsafed to reward his cares. And he showed his gratitude as man ever should, by kindness to others. A poor widow, with two young children stood anxiously gazing at that rich field, waiting for the time when the

gleaners would be admitted to earn their scanty portion of its abundance.

"Come in," said Tom, kindly, "you can go where the reapers have finished, without waiting for the rest. Follow this man's sickle."

The widow's blessing rested on the young man's head. Neither sun's heat nor labour is felt by that devoted mother as she works through the day for her little ones, and secures them what is not only some scant provision for the time, but helps to keep the wolf from the door in the coming winter. While all is joyous bustle in the field, our Nelly is far differently occupied.

"Is Tom at home," asked Harry, by way of an excuse for his early visit to the Grange.

"No, he has begun reaping to-day," said Mrs. Miles; "but walk in and sit down, Mr. Harry, I am very glad to see you again after your heavy sorrow. How is the squire? as well as can be hoped, I trust, after such a trial."

"He is very low and ailing still, Mrs. Miles, but I hope the journey we are about to take will restore him to health. He sent me to enquire whether there was anything he could arrange for you before we leave England."

"Leave England! is it possible that you are going abroad, Mr. Maxwell?" said Mrs. Miles, in surprise.

"Yes," he said, "my father wishes to visit my

dear mother's birth-place, and to see my grandfather once more. I hope we shall not be away very long."

"I am sure all will miss you, Mr. Harry, and no one more than we shall."

"And no one so much as Nelly," thought Harry, but he restrained the impulse to open his heart to the kind sympathising mother of his love, and to tell her how dear her daughter was to him. Mrs. Miles was so refined and superior for her station that the squire's son did not feel it out of place to ask her consent and sympathy for her child's and his own betrothed; but a second and more prudent thought of his duty to his father and promise to his dead mother closed his lips for the present.

"You will not go without seeing the children," said Mrs. Miles, as Harry rose to depart. "Tom is in the 'Nine Acres,' and I think Nelly is in the churchyard; I saw her pass through the gate with a basket of flowers about ten minutes since."

"Then I will go and find one or both of them," said Harry, holding out his hand to take leave. "Then there is nothing either my father or I can do for you before we go."

"Nothing, Mr. Harry; only thank the squire from me for all his attention and kindness to me and mine, and may God restore him to health and happiness and bring you both back in safety."

When Harry left the Grange he took, with slow and faltering steps, the path to the churchyard. It was the first time he had ever shrunk from meeting Nelly ; but now his courage failed him sadly. As he approached the gate, he saw the young girl collecting the dead leaves and faded flowers from her grandmother's grave, but so soon as she caught sight of his figure she threw down her basket and went hastily towards him. In a moment their hands were clasped, and Harry led her to his mother's grave ; but neither spoke, for the sacred place they were in, and the past, made their thoughts fly beyond this world.

"Oh, Nelly, turn those loving, pleading, eyes from me, or I cannot say what you must hear ; and, dear one, be brave, and do not unman me with your grief."

"I will try, Harry. I will be brave," was the half audible reply.

"You know, dear Nelly, how truly I love you ; how you are mingled with my every thought and hope. Nelly, you are a true and humble christian ; and we may both pray God to bless our love, for I believe that next to devotion to his service is pleasing to Him that pure affection, which he himself has ordained. You are my own, my betrothed, Nelly ; and will, with God's blessing, one day be my wife. I trust in your affection, and

your confidence in me should be equally strong, for there is no love without trust."

"It is, it is, Harry, or I should die; go on, I am ready for all you can tell me."

"Then, Nelly, listen. I wish you to look upon me as your future husband. Indeed, I feel that in the sight of God we are plighted man and wife. And now, for the last, saddest words of all. Tomorrow I must leave you, for months, perhaps for a year; nay, darling, be not so agitated. I am only going with my father, whose health requires change of air, to the continent, where we shall visit our relations in Germany. Our separation will only increase our love, dearest. Never let a shadow of distrust cross your pure and loving heart, for wherever I am—and whatever may happen—my thoughts will ever be of you, and you alone. Do you not believe me, Nelly?"

The girl turned her sweet face full on him, and those clear unflinching blue eyes answered better than words.

"Thanks, dearest; and now, my own, my loved one, we must part, and may God bless and keep you."

"One moment, Harry, one moment."

Her head fell on his shoulder. He clasped her to his heart and kissed again and again the sweet young face, as his tears mingled with hers. Then,

with one strong, determined effort, he gently put her from him, placed her on the stone, and rushed from the spot. Nelly waited for a time to subdue her grief, and hide its traces from her mother's tender eyes ; and then she returned home, with a look of placid resignation on her lovely features. Harry was gone ; but he loved her. She was his ; her thoughts were with him, illumined with love.

CHAPTER VI.

ABOUT a week from the day of the interview we have described, Mr. Maxwell and his son arrived safely in the metropolis. We say "safely," because it was by no means a matter of course in those days, that people should travel two hundred miles without being attacked, robbed, and even murdered by outlaws and highwaymen. However, that was happily not the case with Harry and his father, and though their journey might be tedious, it was uneventful and quiet. After a brief stay in London, only prolonged to allow Mr. Maxwell to arrange his affairs with his solicitor and banker, they again started for Dover, carrying with them, by Mr. Thorne's advice, as little ready money as possible. The morning was dark and heavy when they left London, but became a little brighter and clearer as they reached Blackheath. About half way across the heath they saw a cart laden with fruit, and in it sat two men, who of-

ferred their produce for sale to the Maxwells, which offer was civilly but decidedly declined. For some time the cart seemed to hover near the carriage, and then suddenly stopped, and our travellers thought no more of the occurrence.

The carriage drew up at the Peacock, on Shooter's Hill, to bait the weary horses, fatigued even by that short distance, from the extreme heaviness of the roads. While they were waiting at the Inn, the light cart drove up, and the men again offered their Kentish codlins, and Yorkshire pippins for sale. The name of Yorkshire was a passport to the travellers, and they could not resist purchasing a few, for which they paid liberally, and the men, thanking them civilly enough, took their departure.

Harry noticed, as they drove off, what a fast and strong horse they had in their cart.

About an hour after the disappearance of the men, the horses were put to, and they recommenced their ascent with much difficulty. On their right was a thick dark looking wood, on the left a flat marshy country. They could just distinguish the Thames looming through the mist, but the day was again overcast, and a few drops of rain began to fall. They had nearly reached the summit of Shooter's Hill, when the road became almost impassable, and the inmates of the carriage were

jolted, till Harry declared he should have every bone dislocated, if he remained much longer.

"I will get out and walk, if you can keep your seat by putting up your feet against the sides, my dear father," he said, and was just preparing to leave the carriage, when six men suddenly emerged from the wood and surrounded it. They had fire-arms in their hands, and masks effectually concealed their faces. Harry imagined they were about to fire, and placing himself before his father, called on him to crouch down at the bottom of the carriage, but in a moment the men had secured both the travellers, though without any unnecessary violence. Harry struggled desperately, but his father, seeing the hopelessness of resistance, desired him to be calm, and demanded in a quiet, determined tone, what their assailants wanted.

"Money," was the brief reply.

"You shall have what we carry about us, but which is only a few pounds; but that is, on condition of being allowed to continue our journey in peace."

The men laughed mockingly.

"All very fine," said one, "we shall see presently."

They had dragged the sole attendants of the travellers, the post boy and Mr. Maxwell's valet, to the ground, and began to cut the traces.

"What is to be done," said Harry, in a low voice to his father.

"Nothing ; resistance is worse than useless."

The men having bound and blindfolded the servants, proceeded to perform the same good offices to the squire and his son, who were then led into the wood.

"Take all we have," said the squire, beseechingly ; "life is more precious than gold ; it is not much, but you are welcome to it."

"Little will not serve our turn," said the ruffians, "we want much, and much we will have."

Harry and his father were led, they knew not whither.

The son's first thought was for his father's safety, and he implored the men to let him go, and be content with his capture as a hostage.

"No, no, Harry ; where you go, I go also."

The men took no apparent notice of the little dialogue, but went on for what appeared an interminable time to the captives, till at last they arrived at a hut, into which they thrust the travellers, and taking from them their travelling cloaks, and unbandaging their eyes, they disappeared.

"Courage, dear father," said Harry, cheerfully ; "I am sure their object is not murder, it is gold, and that they must have."

"They shall have what we can give them," said

his father, "so they will but spare our lives. What will be the end of this, my boy; it is indeed a bad beginning of our journey."

The rain was now falling in torrents, followed by peals of thunder, which shook the hut to the very foundation. Harry groped about the place, to discover, if possible, where they were, but there was apparently neither door nor window, though now and then a vivid flash of lightning came through a crevice in the wall and ceiling.

At length the storm ceased, and they heard the approach of footsteps, and a man entered, though by what means remained a mystery.

"I am come to make you a fair offer," he said. "If you will give me and my band five hundred pounds, you shall be free, and go unmolested on your journey. I imagine you think your lives worth that little amount."

"Little, indeed," said Harry. "Do you suppose we carry such a sum as that about with us, or have it to throw away on——"

"Hush, Harry, hush," said Mr. Maxwell; "listen calmly to what he has to say."

"That's fair and reasonable," said the man. "I like that, and I'll not be hard with you. I know that you have not the sum with you, but gentlemen of your quality have always the means of commanding what you want. Here are writing

materials. If you will write an order on your bankers, and a letter to guarantee the safety of the bearer—for, mark me, your lives will depend on his return, then you shall be free.”

“But what will you guarantee for so large a sum?” asked Harry, stopping his father, who was about eagerly to consent to the terms.

“Your freedom, with that of your servants; and your carriage and horses, and your baggage, which has not been touched, will be restored to you so soon as the money is paid. I never break my word, and one gentleman should trust another.”

Harry could scarcely help laughing, even in this serious emergency, at the man’s impudence; but it was useless arguing with the scoundrel, and after a brief consultation with his father, he wrote the order, which was signed by the Squire. A few lines requesting prompt and immediate payment were added, and then the man, turning once more the dark side of the lantern, which had enabled them to write the letter, departed.

“Is there no way of punishing these villains?” said Harry, indignantly.

“None, my son. It would be equally dangerous to attempt it, but doubtless their hour will come, and that ere very long, as they are sure to persevere in the same course.”

Hours went on. Mr. Maxwell, weary and ex-

hausted, had sunk on the floor asleep, and Harry rejoiced to hear his heavy breathing. He remained waking for some time, listening to the voices which he could plainly distinguish, though whether outside or in an adjoining room he could not determine. At last he too fell asleep, when he was wakened by a voice, pronouncing his name.

"Your carriage and horses are waiting for you, Mr. Maxwell."

Harry started up, rushed to his father's side, and roused him to consciousness with the joyful news. They were compelled to submit again to the operation of blindfolding, and in this manner they were led through the wood and placed in the carriage. At a given signal the bandages were removed, and the highwaymen disappeared as quick as lightning.

After ascertaining that the baggage was safe and intact, our travellers drove on, and soon after arrived at the village of Welling, where they remained to recruit their exhausted energies, and make what arrangements they could for the safety of their remaining journey to Dover. They reached their destination on the following evening, having, thanks to their detention and the slowness of the then mode of travelling, occupied as many days as we, in these modern times, take hours in the transit. Doubtless our fathers had many hours of

enjoyment in their deliberate mode of travel, which we have lost. The pleasant resting-places, the quiet enjoyment of scenery, and composure of mind and body were all theirs, but still it may be doubted whether we would exchange our quick and certain railway trains for their slow and always doubtful post-chaises, with their relays of horses, their scampish post-boys, and courteously-tyrannical landlords, informing the traveller he could not get on that night.

No ; we would not give up our railroads for the charms of a postchaise and four, whatever anybody may say to the contrary.

· After a brief stay at Dover, our travellers fairly started on their tour, by embarking in a sailing packet for Ostend, and there we will take leave of them for the present, and return in time and events, to the commencement of our story, to trace the fate of one in whom, we flatter ourselves, the reader feels some interest, and whose mysterious disappearance had caused so much anxiety to his relations and friends.

CHAPTER VII.

ON a rough, low pallet bed, scarcely better than a mattress on the floor, in the corner of a room as poorly furnished, and desolate as suited so wretched a couch, lay the form of a man, in whose pale, blood-stained features, and prostrate form, could with difficulty be recognised the manly, open face, and vigorous limbs of the proud farmer of Dellcombe Grange.

It was the day after his disappearance, and the spot in which he lay was not many miles distant from Dellcombe, and yet he was as completely and hopelessly separated from home, and friends, and country, as if he had been transported to the antipodes, and months had rolled by since he had been torn from all he had held dear.

He was lying with his eyes shut, but not sleeping, though in a state of half unconsciousness from loss of blood and the injuries he had received. A strong and healthy man was John Miles, but the

struggle with superior numbers had been a desperate one, and he had resisted so determinedly as to induce greater violence from his captors than they might perhaps otherwise have used. Too well the poor fellow guessed who were the assailants who had thus arrested his peaceful return from that unlucky visit to the Manor House. The terrors of the press gang, unknown to our happier times, had spread even to secluded Dellcombe, and John Miles had strongly suspected the errand of the rough, ill-looking men he had seen on the day of his capture, at the village inn. And equally well he felt that his present position was beyond redress or appeal, as he lay suffering and wretched on that lowly bed.

A rough, but not unkindly voice, roused him from the sort of lethargy in which he was plunged. He opened his eyes, and saw an old sailor standing by his bed.

"Well, shipmate, how are you? I think you have weathered last night's squall pretty well."

"I am not your shipmate, and I don't know what you mean by weathering the squall," said John, feebly.

"Well, I mean that scuffle you had with our men. I thought at one time that we should have lost you, but that blow on your head soon made you quiet enough—no struggling after that—and we

all thought you were going to slip the cable : but come, my good fellow, cheer up, we must not take sick men on board ; we want able-bodied seamen in the ' Ocean.' ”

John made no reply ; indeed he had relapsed into his former hopeless exhaustion.

“ Poor fellow,” said Joe ; “ I feel some sneaking pity for him, and am almost sorry he did not get clear of us last night.”

For a short time he disappeared, then returning with brandy in a rude flask, he poured some down John's mouth, and washed the wound on his head with the remainder, mixed with water.

“ There, rouse yourself, comrade ; our men will soon be back, and then off we go. I guess they've found more game than they expected, or they'd have been here before this.”

John opened his eyes, and this time with more consciousness and vigour than he had done before.

“ Where am I ?” he said. “ What is all this ?”

“ You are all safe, my hearty, and won't complain of your treatment by and bye : and the best thing you can do is to keep quiet, and submit to what you can't help. You're booked now, and must make the best of it.”

“ Had I strength,” said John, “ I would make a bold push for my liberty yet ; but I am helpless, and—friendless.”



Overcome by mental and bodily suffering, the strong man burst into tears.

Joe respected his grief too much to attempt to interrupt this uncontrollable burst of sorrow, but when the poor fellow was once more calm, he said,—

“Is there anything I can do for you, my friend? I’m not quite so hard as I look, though ours is a rough trade.”

“Yes, oh yes,” said John, eagerly; “if you could get a letter posted to my family, to tell them what has become of me, I would never forget it.”

Joe laughed.

“Nor I either, I reckon. No, comrade, I can’t do that, it’s against rules; and when you’ve been in the service a bit, you’ll find it no joke to go against discipline. Anything else?”

“No!” said John, despairingly “I don’t care for myself, it’s only those poor helpless ones.”

Joe turned away, perhaps afraid of his own firmness, and opening the window, looked out and listened attentively.

The moon was shining brightly, and for the first time John saw distinctly his companion’s features. He appeared to him to be a man about fifty years of age, his figure tall and slight, his face bronzed and weatherbeaten, as if from long exposure to the element, but the expression of those hard features

was not harsh or unkind, and the very voice had a heartiness in its gruff tones.

"Here they are," he exclaimed, "I thought they couldn't be long; that's the coxswain's whistle sure enough. There, you'd better eat your supper, comrade, for there'll be little time for that; now I'll leave you for ten minutes or so, but take care you don't try to be off, or it will be the worst night's work you ever did in your life."

As he closed the door, John tried to rise and take the not untempting food set before him, but he could not eat. He eagerly drank the ale which Joe had brought, to quench his feverish thirst, but the hot rasher of bacon and slice of cheese sickened him, and lying down again he sank into a half dose, from which he was again awakened by Joe's entrance.

"Now, my hearty, we are ready to start, so up with you."

John, with much difficulty rose from his lowly bed, but he staggered, and nearly fell on attempting to walk.

"Here," said Joe, "I'll give you a hand; bear away on me, and we'll get along, I'll warrant you. My comrades are on before, with a goodly cargo to look after; there—steady—we've not far to go, and then it's all plain sailing."

John walked feebly on, supported by Joe's



vigorous arm, till the sight of gleaming lights and splashing oars, told him they were near the sea.

"Here we are, at last," said Joe, cheerfully, and giving a loud "Ahoy; avast there," one or two rough-looking men approached.

"All right, Joe?"

"Yes. Where are the others?"

"Forward in the boats. You've not a moment to spare."

John was hurried on between Joe and one of the men who had accosted them, and was soon thrown, rather than conducted, on board a large boat, and from the noise of oars and the gleaming beams of the moon, he could distinguish at least two more boats, well filled with men, before them. But there was no noise—no sound of voices; all was still as the night, and the unhappy man concluded that his companions in misfortune, were, like himself, compelled to bear their cruel fate in silence.

At last he could perceive a large, black object on the water, which they were rapidly nearing.

"Ocean, ahoy."

"Ahoy, boats."

In less than half an hour all the men were on board, and for some time terrible confusion prevailed. The "pressed" men were threatened, abused, pushed rudely about, and some of the more brutal of the sailors were proceeding to blows, when

the captain, attracted by the noise, suddenly appeared among them.

"Silence," he exclaimed in a voice of thunder, and, when the quiet which ensued permitted his voice to be heard, he continued—

"No unnecessary violence, my men ; your duty has been performed, but it must not be enforced by cruelty unworthy of British seamen. And you, who have been forced from your homes to serve the king, remember that any more resistance or disobedience will only bring on you severe punishment. Do your duty like men, and good subjects, and be sure it was necessity which has made this compulsion to be unwillingly adopted by your government. The best advice which I can give you is to forget the past, look cheerfully at your situation, and hope for a happy return to your homes and families, with the proud consciousness of having done your duty, and it may be—plenty of prize-money in your pockets. You are all in the vigour of manhood, you may therefore fairly look forward to this result, and meanwhile do your duty cheerfully, observe strict discipline, and you will be rewarded, as brave men should. Any attempt at escape, or to communicate at present with your friends, will be severely punished."

The captain looked round the circle for a moment, and then slowly retired ; but the effect of

his words was a return to order and discipline, which for a time had been broken through.

The men who had been brought on board were duly enrolled, and installed in their berths ; those who had been injured had their wounds dressed, and among others our friend John Miles. The wound on the head was not, the surgeon pronounced, dangerous, and two or three days would suffice to bring him round, but he was ordered to remain quiet in his hammock.

About four o'clock Joe Smith looked in on him.

"Well, comrade ; I'm glad to see you're getting round again ; the doctor tells me you'll be ready for work in a day or two."

"What's the name of the ship?" asked John.

"The 'Ocean,' and a finer vessel was never launched ; plenty of grog, and one of the best commanders the navy can boast ; the king may well be proud of having such men in his service ; and let me tell you you're lucky to be on board such a ship, and under such a commander as Captain George."

Poor John could not feel that anything was lucky which tore him from his wife and children and home, but he had too much sense to indulge in useless lamentations, and he merely said :

"Where are we bound for—and on what service?"

"Can't tell yet ; we've been waiting all day for orders. I think the ' Flying Jenny ' has broken one of her wings, or perhaps both, for she is two tides late, and the captain can't stir without his orders ; and when they come, it's very like we sha'n't know where we're bound for, for many a day to come ; a man-of-war is not like an old wife's tea-table, all gossip, and everybody knowing other folk's business."

The " Flying Jenny " at last made her appearance, and brought orders for as many of the new hands as could be spared after the " Ocean " had completed her necessary complement, to be shipped on board her, for other and urgent service. Captain George gave the necessary directions, and after the muster roll had been gone over, a selection was made from the men so lately placed on the ship's books, in order to carry out the Admiralty orders, a selection which the captain himself superintended. When they were on deck, and the roll had been called over, Captain George beckoned Joe Smith to him ; Joe was an old hand, and a privileged favourite of his commander, and often admitted to greater familiarity than comported with the rigid discipline of the king's service.

" Smith, where's the man you spoke to me about this morning ? "

" On the sick list, sir, " said Joe respectfully, " he'd an ugly blow from one of our men, but,—

but,—he'll be a first-rate seaman, sir, or I'm no judge—and—and—he'll do credit to the 'Ocean,' sir."

The captain smiled :

" And you want him to remain. Well, Smith, let's see what's his name."

" Miles, sir—John Miles ; and a fine powerful fellow—he took four of us to master him ; he's worth his pay, sir, you'll find."

The captain made no reply, and took one or two turns up and down the deck in deep thought before resuming his duty. But when the men were shipped on board the " Flying Jenny," Joe Smith perceived to his satisfaction that John Miles was not called, and that his name remained quietly enrolled on the ship's books, when the crew were again mustered in the evening, before the final arrangements were again completed for starting for their unknown destination.

The " Ocean" was ordered to join the fleet in the Downs, and for that spot she weighed anchor and started about six o'clock next morning, and was soon under full sail, with a fresh breeze.

Meanwhile, happily unconscious of all that had been passing on deck, John Miles had enjoyed a quiet profound slumber, thanks perhaps to the composing draught administered by the surgeon. He had dreamed of home ; of his wife and his

darling Nelly. He thought he saw his wife standing alone on the shore ; her brown hair blowing in the night wind, a piteous imploring look on her pale features. She stretched out her arm to the ship, and beckoned him to return. The wind rose higher and higher, but ever and anon on its blasts it brought the sound of his own name in eager, despairing accents. At last, he caught the words, " come back, oh, come back, or I shall die."

He could bear it no longer, but cast himself on the foaming billows which bore him away from the shore, and then engulfed in their depths. Then he was again floating gently over them, and not far from him, he seemed to see Joe Smith in a boat, struggling hard to reach him. At the helm stood an angel, whose features were strangely like those of his daughter Ellen.

" Fear not, dear father," said the well remembered tone, " thy grave shall not be in the sea."

Then taking him by the hand, she supported him to the boat, which she accompanied to the ship, and bidding him put his whole trust and confidence in the All Wise, and All Powerful, who could bring him again in safety to his home, she disappeared.

John woke up wonderfully refreshed and comforted, and better able than he had yet been to

thank Joe Smith for his kindness, when he appeared soon after with his breakfast.

"You are coming round nicely, comrade," said the old sailor, kindly, "and you've had a lucky escape, I can tell you, of losing your berth under Captain George, and going under some of the brutes who are to be found disgracing the King's service, God bless him, and now you had better get up, and come on deck, there's a nice breeze freshening, and it will set you on your pins again in a jiffy."

With Joe's assistance John managed to get on deck, and in spite of his sufferings, he could not help looking with astonished admiration at the scene before him. He had never before seen the sea, and he now gazed at the expanse of waters, and the sail in the horizon, with the brilliant effect of the sun on the dancing waves, with feelings of pious reverence to the maker of such wonders.

"The angel was indeed right," he thought, "my trust shall be in God, who can do what ever he sees right, and by his strength I will bear and do all that it is his pleasure shall be laid upon me."

From that moment he felt a sense of calm resignation and manly determination to perform his duty, whatever it might be, and however unjust might seem his present position, leaving the rest in the keeping of the Omnipotent.

By degrees the little wind that had been blowing during the day lulled, and the sails of the ship flapped lazily to and fro, like the wings of tired birds, but the sea gulls flew in flocks towards the shore, a sign that the dead calm would not last many hours.

About half-past four, the ship anchored off Harwich, receiving a salute from Landguard Fort, which she returned.

Captain George, seeing John Miles standing leaning feebly against the wheel, approached and said kindly that he was glad to see him on deck, and hoped he would soon be strong enough to begin his duties.

Had John understood better the strict etiquette of a man-of-war, he would have been astonished at this condescension, and ascribed it to some special cause. As it was, he respectfully thanked the captain, and declared himself anxious to begin at once.

Joe Smith still stood his friend. He gave him all the assistance he could in mastering the difficulties of such novel work at a mature age, and John's active habits and vigorous frame promised no little progress in the lessons he acquired with hearty good will. About nine o'clock the moon, which had been struggling for some time to free herself from the dark and lowering clouds, burst forth; a strong breeze rose, and in a moment the

yards were manned, and the sails unfurled to catch the welcome wind.

The whole scene was a strange but impressive one to the farmer, and he almost forgot his troubles in the excitement of what to the others was a mere routine movement.

The wind was favourable, and by noon the following day the "Ocean" anchored in the Downs. As they approached the fleet, it appeared to John that they were nearing a forest of trees, stripped of their foliage. It was indeed a proud and splendid sight, that stately powerful fleet of Old England, the queen of the seas, and yet how many a heavy heart was to be found in those fine vessels; how many a manly hand brushed away a tear, as the eye fell on the white cliffs of their native land, beheld perhaps for the last time. John Miles thought of his wife, his children, his aged mother, and breathed a prayer, for their safety, to Him who could watch over both the widow and the fatherless in their loneliness and sorrow.

The storm which had been threatening for some hours broke forth in fury. The equinoctial gales were beginning with unusual violence, and some consternation prevailed in the fleet. Many of the ships broke away from their moorings, and were seriously damaged during the night; some lives, even, were lost in sight of their native shore, from



which no aid could be given in so irresistible a gale. Guns and signals of distress were either unheard, or could not be answered, and for the whole of that night the greatest confusion and terror reigned in the warring elements, and those exposed to their fury. In the morning the storm abated, but the sea presented a melancholy spectacle, which told too plainly the state of the night's disasters. Many of the small craft had been totally wrecked, the shore was crowded by terror-stricken and sorrowing relatives, and others, anxious to render help if possible; and as the various planks and casks and other fragments of the unfortunate vessels and boats were brought to land by the waves, they were eagerly examined as evidences of the fate of the missing ones. During the day ships came crowding in from all parts; the scattered fleet once more formed into order; the captains were summoned on board the admiral's ship, to receive their orders, and at dawn next morning the guns, which were the signal for weighing anchor, came booming in the quiet air. The last sound died away, and then every man took off his hat, and three hearty cheers for Old England, resounded from every voice, and was sent back again by the loud echoes of the neighbouring cliffs.

Soon after the sailing of the fleet, several of the ships were detached to cruise in different directions,



and the "Ocean" with two or three frigates, was ordered to the Mediterranean on a secret and special service. But now nearly a month had elapsed since they left the Channel, during which time they had been quite inactive, and the men began to feel impatient for something to break the dull monotony of their cruise, the object of which was only known to the chief officer of the vessel. Even a storm would have proved a welcome excitement, but as yet they had not had one to vary the scene, since they left the Downs.

It was again nearly the full moon, but a dark and ominous mist encircled her brightness. The ship had anchored for the night off the isle of Monte Christo. There had been more wind that evening than usual, and the sea was running high.

John Miles, who had become a great favorite with his officers, from his activity, attention, and strict performance of duty, had ventured at last to prefer an earnest request, through the second lieutenant, to Captain George, that he might be permitted to send a letter home to his family. To John's surprise and even alarm he was soon afterwards summoned to the captain's cabin, and after some trifling questions as to a minor point of John's duty, the captain said :

" You come from Dellcombe, Miles ?"

" Yes, sir."

"Where did you live—near the village?"

"I was tenant of the Grange farm, sir, under Squire Maxwell."

"Ah—"

The captain stopped, went on writing, then looked up again.

"You have a wife and family. Is there any one in your neighbourhood to look after them?"

"Yes, I hope so, sir. The squire is very good, and so is Dr. Bright, bless him, he saved my wife's life."

Again the captain paused, his lips parted but he checked himself, and merely said :

"You want permission to write to your wife ; I think your conduct deserves it, from Lieutenant Morris's report. You will be allowed to send a letter, and I trust you will go on to do your duty, though—"

He paused, and John Miles taking the motion of his hand as a dismissal, made his salute, and left the cabin. His grateful heart inwardly determined him to do his utmost to strive and repay the kindness of the captain.

He had learnt enough of the rules of the service too, to appreciate that kindness and notice as it deserved, and indeed, he soon found some jealousy was excited by the unwonted circumstance of a private seaman being honoured with



an audience of the commander of H.M.S. "Ocean."

That night John Miles and Joe Smith were on watch, and the third lieutenant in charge of the ship, a young officer rather inclined to leave to so trusty an old hand as Joe, the full share of the duty, while he abandoned himself, if not to sleep, at least to a sweet or sad reverie of times, and places, and persons far away, and it might be very dear to him.

Joe Smith was trusty and experienced, and John Miles zealous and quick, and the vessel safe in their hands.

The men had spent some time in their monotonous measured walk exchanging brief sentences from time to time in an under tone, and ever and anon gazing at the gradually declining moon, which to Joe's experienced eyes, bore signs of "dirty weather."

Suddenly John stopped, and looked earnestly in the direction of the island.

"What is it!" said Joe, perceiving his companion's fixed, eager look.

"Look yonder," he replied, "I am much mistaken if that is not a small squadron nearing us."

Joe looked in the same direction; at first he could only perceive some black specks on the water; but by degrees they assumed a more distinct ap-

pearance, and he confessed that they bore the form of small vessels, though it might be a mere illusion.

He communicated his suspicions to Lieutenant Morris, who, roused from his day dreams, at once took a deliberate and careful examination through his glass. At first he could make out nothing, but after a few moments' inspection, he began to agree with the men, that the appearance was, to say the least, singular.

"Go and summon the first lieutenant, Miles," he said; "and you, Smith, go to the quartermaster; he's about the oldest man on board besides yourself."

Lieutenant Kerr was on deck in a few moments, and the weather-beaten tar, who Smith had called to the council, joined them an instant after.

"They certainly are ships," said Lieutenant Kerr, after gazing through his glass; "but I can't make out their colours, or any sign of their nation, can you, Jones?"

"Aye, aye, sir, they are Monseurs, I'd swear; look at the shape of the bowsprits, and the height of the masts. They are none of ours, that's certain."

Captain George was by this time on deck, and held an anxious conversation with his officers.

"There are six or seven of them," said Kerr.

"I can count them distinctly now; and one appears to be steering towards the island."

"What is to be done?" said the captain, uneasily. "It is pretty certain our ships would not be nearing Monte Christo, and the odds are tremendous if they perceive us, though our metal would be much the heaviest. But I have no right to risk the 'Ocean,' especially—"

The last words were spoken in a low tone to Lieutenant Kerr.

"Could not a boat be lowered to reconnoitre?" asked young Morris. "I would gladly take the service, sir."

"I don't doubt it," said the captain, smiling; "but there's a gale coming on, and no boat would live in a Mediterranean squall. The darkness will favour us—if it does—"

As he spoke a flash of lightning, followed by a heavy peal of thunder, startled them; and in a few moments the sky was overcast, the wind rose, and all betokened one of the dangerous, though brief storms, for which that region is famous. At intervals the lightning threw a sudden glare on the whole scene, and they could clearly make out several smaller boats, leaving the island, heavily laden with, what was soon made plainly out, to be barrels.

"This is strange," observed the captain, "there

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from the scene of danger. Even the hearty and brave British tars stood, in speechless horror, gazing at the strange spectacle which the Island presented, and it was some time before they were sufficiently collected to comprehend the cause of the phenomenon.

It was, however, tolerably evident that the French had used the caverns of the Island as stores for their gunpowder, some of which they had been fetching away that night. Most probably the barrels at the mouth of the cavern had been struck by the lightning, and the remainder ignited; but the French always gave the credit of the disaster to the English.

The men watched anxiously for the return of day to observe the motions of the enemy, and were perfectly willing to engage him at any odds; but when morning dawned it was evident that the frigate and her companions had got away during the night. The captain himself, with one or two of his officers, went on shore and inspected the scene of the disaster. It would be impossible to describe the desolation presented—the shore was one mass of blackened fragments, seared rocks, scattered planks, and here and there even strong trees lying torn up by the roots. They satisfied themselves of the complete destruction of the magazine, and returned to the ship, which soon afterwards sailed for Gibraltar.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER a long and tedious journey Mr. Maxwell and his son arrived at Cologne. The many delays, which at that time were even more common than now in continental travelling, had hindered them in their progress to a vexatious and wearisome degree. On one occasion their carriage had been stopped when first leaving the hotel where they had slept, themselves put under surveillance, and their baggage and papers examined, though on what pretext they were never informed. Thus, from the combined effects of sea sickness, fatigue, and anxiety, succeeding to the severe shock he had sustained, poor Mr. Maxwell was completely worn out on their arrival at the famous Cathedral City.

“ Harry, my boy, write to your grandfather, and say that we are detained longer than we had intended, though you need not alarm him by speaking of my indisposition. Tell him not to expect us.



for a few days, but we will join him as soon as possible."

Harry obeyed, and a courier was despatched to Frankfort with the letter.

"Now, my boy, I shall not leave the hotel to-day, I mean to indulge in a comfortable rest, but you had better take a guide, and stroll about as long as you like; there are many curious and interesting objects in this old city."

"But I do not like to leave you if you are ill, my dear father."

"Nonsense, Harry, I am not ill, you know, and can do perfectly well with Blacker's attendance, even if I should require anything, which I do not expect."

Harry established his father near the window, thinking he might be amused by the lively scene on the bridge, of which the windows of the hotel they had chosen commanded a view, and then, after securing a trusty and experienced guide, set forth on his tour of inspection.

This was Harry's first introduction to the world, it must be remembered, after an unusually secluded life, and to his youthful and buoyant spirits, everything appeared wonderful and enchanting. His active, restless nature had long secretly coveted change and occupation, and for the present the gratification of his natural wish to take some part in life's stirring drama, was of course denied to him.

Every incident, every object during their journey had therefore charms suitable for his unsophisticated mind.

The sea, he justly considered, about the most glorious object in nature, and had even gone so far in his admiration, as to vent his regrets to his father that he had not early entered the navy, but Mr. Maxwell appeared so disturbed at the very idea, that he had dropped the subject. In crossing the Channel he had luckily seen many things which interested him, and which he could enjoy from his perfect immunity from sea sickness ; and the captain of the packet, pleased by his eager and naïve intelligence, took pains to explain and point out all that was worthy of notice. But the sight of a small squadron under full sail, had impressed him more deeply than any other object, and even in his dreams the stately picture would sometimes present itself to his view. On his arrival at Cologne, he had been much amused and interested by the bridge, which appeared far too low for the vessel to pass under, and it was not till he had watched with some terror the progress of a ship in full sail, to within a hundred yards of it, that he had perceived the solution of the mystery. The bridge suddenly parted in the centre, and the vessel passed safely and calmly through. The apparently solid bridge was built of boats.

The young man's first visit was to the cathedral, and he scanned the sacred and magnificent edifice with wondering admiration. He entered, with his guide, the small chapel, containing the shrine of the three Kings of Cologne, and a priest opened it, and displayed its wonderful relics. The names of the Magi were engraved in the skulls, in precious stones; and the guide did not fail to relate to his young patron's astonished ears, the history of these famous men, and the wonderful miracles wrought at their shrine. Mothers and wives would remain on their knees for days and nights together, praying for the recovery of husband, child, or relative, from some dangerous malady, and rarely had these supplications been in vain. Yet more frequently would the merchants of the city visit the chapel, and offer up petitions and vows, for the safety of valuable cargoes, exposed to the caprice of the stormy waves. Such were the virtues ascribed to the very skulls of the men, who once bent in lowly homage to the Holy Infant of Nazareth.

After a prolonged inspection of every object of interest, they left the cathedral, to visit the chapel of St. Ursula; but Harry gave a lingering, parting look at the outside of the edifice, before taking a last farewell of its grandeur. To his surprise, he saw a crane on the top of the tower, and enquired its object.



"That," said the guide, "was left centuries ago by the stonemasons, who were constructing the tower."

"Why did they not finish it?" asked Harry.

"That is a question, mein herr, more easily asked than answered. It had remained unmolested for many ages, till a short time since it was complained of so loudly as an eyesore, that the authorities gave orders for it to be removed; but this was a more difficult task than might have been imagined. Many lives were sacrificed in the attempt, before it was crowned with success, and no sooner had the last piece of the old relic been removed, than a violent storm, such as no one living ever remembered, visited the city. A thunderbolt fell through the roof of the cathedral, causing the greatest terror and destruction; many of its rare and beautiful old windows were completely shattered, and the city itself seriously injured by a perfect deluge of water; superstitious terror filled every mind; they feared they had committed sacrilege by removing the old crane, and considered the storm as a retributive punishment for their impiety. No time was lost in replacing it in its original position, where it has remained unmolested ever since, and is likely to continue so."

They had now entered the chapel of St. Ursula, but Harry was more horrified than edified by the

sight that met his eyes. Ranged in ghastly and repulsive order, were the eleven thousand skulls of the unfortunate pilgrim virgins, and the guide was proceeding to give the details of the barbarous massacre of the owners of the said skulls, when Harry stopped him, assuring him that the hideous relics had given him a sufficiently vivid idea of their martyrdom.

It was dark when Harry returned to the hotel, and found his father already retired to rest; so he sat down by the window, and gazed out in the obscure light at the dark and flowing river, thinking over the adventures of the day, and on the ever present image of her he loved so dearly and so lastingly.

Harry was agreeably surprised to hear his father say the next morning that having slept so refreshingly, he felt quite equal to continuing their journey. Shortly afterwards the carriage drove to the door, and the travellers once more started *en route* for Frankfort, intending to make Bonn their next resting place.

As they drove through the narrow, dirty streets of Cologne, everything appeared enveloped in a thick mist. Harry looked in vain for the old crane to which so strange a legend was attached, he could not distinguish it through the heavy vapour. They soon, however, left the city and fog far behind, and

breathed a bright clear atmosphere as they drove at a tolerable pace towards Bonn, which they reached early in the day.

"Do you feel strong enough to go out with me on a little exploring tour?" asked Harry.

"No, my dear son; I prefer being perfectly quiet and alone," was the reply. "But that need not prevent your going. Do as you did yesterday; take a guide, and in the evening you can give me the benefit of your observations without my enduring fatigue."

Harry assented, and the necessary arrangements were soon made.

"What are you going to do with those poles? Are they for walking sticks?" asked Harry, jestingly, as he saw the preparations made by his guide.

"Yes, meinherr," the man answered, with a smile. "I thought you might choose to climb the Drachenfell this afternoon."

"How long would it take us?"

"About four hours."

"We should hardly have time. Show me what you can of the town and its neighbourhood."

As they left the hotel, the beautiful river broke in on their view. On arriving at the Alte Zoll, nothing could exceed the wild and sublime grandeur that met their eyes. There—rising up in gigantic majesty the seven mountains—the Dra-

chenfells, the most prominent of all, standing in bold relief with its rugged and precipitous sides, rising as it were from the river ; on its crest stood an old and picturesque castle. The sun's mellow beams were resting on the summits of the mountains, making them appear one mass of shining gold.

"How beautiful ! how sublime ! how unequalled are the works of the Almighty !" thought Harry ; "and how lovely is this world, of which I know so little."

The guide asked him if he could manage a three miles' walk.

"Yes, and treble the distance," replied the young man, smiling.

They turned their steps towards Krenzberg. On arriving there, they entered a small church, where the Suisse soon made his appearance. Harry was shewn the sacred stairs, which led up to Pilate's judgment hall, bearing stains of blood that had fallen, tradition said, from the sacred brow, and to adore which, many thousand pilgrims, some coming as many as a hundred miles, annually arrive. The guide asked him if he would like to ascend the stairs, and Harry, with youthful curiosity, began to mount a few steps, when the angry voice of the *Suisse* arrested his progress.

"Meinherr, meinherr, you commit sacrilege by ascending the holy stairs on foot : those prints are

worn not by the feet, but by the knees of reverent pilgrims."

Harry apologized, and returned to *terra firma*, not feeling at all ambitious to imitate this feat of holy agility.

He desired the guide to come for him by seven o'clock next morning, as he intended ascending the Drachenfells.

The sun was shining brightly through Harry's bedroom window when he awoke, after a night's sound sleep ; and, looking at his watch, he perceived that the hour he had appointed for the guide to meet him had arrived ; but his father having told him that he should not resume his journey before mid-day, he yielded to his fatigue, and took a short time longer for repose. On leaving his room, he found the guide waiting for him, and, after a hasty breakfast, they started on their expedition. They did not cross the river at Bonn, but walked two miles along its course, and in a quiet little nook found at last a boat waiting to take them to Koenigswinter. As they were steering towards that place, Harry saw within a short distance, a beautiful little island, surrounded with weeping willows : he expressed a wish to row close to it, which was, after some difficulty, complied with—pulling alongside the island, where the current was less rapid.

The scene around looked peaceful and beautiful, and the only sound they heard in the quiet morning air, was the rushing of the rapid river. The spot looked like a fairy bower, the trees drooping over on either side, kissed by the strong current as it flowed by; but it was tenanted by more holy people than the fairies. The island was Nonnenwerth, where devout women, whose lives were dedicated to the service of their God, passed their tranquil lives. As the boat lay almost hidden under one of the drooping trees, the air was instantaneously filled with music so soft and rich in melody, as almost to appear to the romantic imagination of our hero, to be voices of angels. The whole scene was to Harry so novel, so supernatural, that he could not for some moments realize his own existence. When at last he returned to some consciousness of surrounding objects, he asked the boatman whence that beautiful music came, and was informed that it was the nuns singing their morning hymn. All too soon for him those sweet sounds died away, and the boat once more resumed its course.

"Do you see yonder castle, mein herr," asked the guide. "That is called Rupert's Tower. There is a very interesting story connected with it, which I will tell you by and bye."

They soon landed, and at once commenced their ascent.

"Now for the tale," said Harry, impatiently.

"Well, then, meinherr. Many years ago Rupert the Brave lived with his father at the castle of Tagenburgh: he was a brave man, beloved by his friends, and dreaded by his enemies. At the time I speak of, the Rhine was infested with robbers, and almost every castle had been attacked by strong bands, with the exception of Tagenburgh, which they never dared to approach, for they stood in great awe of the young Baron Rupert. In the castle of Drachenfels dwelt, with her father, the fair maid of the Rhine, Hildegarde, to whom Rupert had been long a suitor, and to whom he was now formally betrothed, although the two families had been for some time at deadly feud. However, the father of Hildegarde willingly promised Rupert his daughter's hand, being glad to be reconciled to so brave an enemy.

"The building of Rupert's Tower was at once commenced, at the expense of the two families, for the future abode of the young couple, but they were not to be married till it was furnished and ready to receive them. A few months before it was completed, Rupert was very unexpectedly summoned by a brave and warlike uncle, whose bidding he dared not disobey, to the holy war in

Palestine ; and he was, therefore, obliged to tear himself away from his beautiful Hildegarde.

“ Rupert’s absence was long, and the poor betrothed watched patiently and anxiously for tidings of him, but none came. Month after month rolled away ; years, long and dreary, passed, but he came not.

“ At last news was received that he was dead. Poor Hildegarde, now almost distracted with grief at the loss of her lover, knew not what to do, for she was alone in the world, her father having died soon after Rupert’s departure. After some time the poor girl yielded to the repeated requests of the Abbess of Nonnonwerth to join the sisterhood, and she bade a last adieu to the old castle of the Drachenfels, and left it to decay, for it was never after occupied.

“ Scarcely had she entered the convent, when the horn of Rupert was heard as he ascended the mountain, followed by his warriors. He hurried to the castle, and demanded admission, but no answer came to the summons. He returned at last to his father’s castle, where he learnt, to his great horror, that Hildegarde was dead to him and to the world. He rode furiously down the mountain, and giving his horse to a page, who had followed him, he took a boat to the sacred isle, thinking there might yet be time to save his betrothed. He

knew by the sweet sounds that met his ear that the nuns were at vespers ; and after waiting a short time he went up to the nunnery, and demanded to see the Abbess.

“ ‘ Why is the holy sisterhood thus disturbed, sir, to-night ? ’

“ ‘ Holy mother, ’ he said, ‘ restore to me my bride. ’

“ ‘ Too late, Sir Knight. She has already taken the vows of the convent. ’

“ ‘ At least, holy mother, let me behold her once again, and I will depart in peace, and for ever. ’

“ ‘ Never ! ’ was the stern reply. ‘ It is too late. ’

“ These last words fell like a thunderbolt on Rupert’s stout heart. Without another word he left the island.

“ He took up his abode in what was to have been his bridal home, and there for years the brave soldier lived like a hermit. One evening, when the sun was sinking low in the west, and the day was fast departing, Rupert entered his boat, and rowed towards the Nonenwerth, for some mysterious presentiment told him he would again see his Hildegarde.

“ He lingered for some time, and presently heard footsteps on the island. He listened in breathless suspense ; they came nearer and nearer, and he heard some one sighing heavily. Then he heard

his own name pronounced, and the next moment Hildegard's features met his eyes. But, oh ! how changed. Those brilliant eyes had lost their light, and now looked lustreless : her face was pale and wan, her form wasted to a shadow. Rupert could not resist calling her by name, and at the sound of that well-known voice she started violently.

“ ‘ Rupert, Rupert, why are you here ? If you are discovered, my life would be the forfeit.’ ”

“ ‘ Only one word, dear Hildegard.’ ”

“ ‘ No, no—I do not belong to the world, not even to you now.’ ”

“ ‘ Yes, yes—you are mine ; you always shall be mine. Let me but touch that dear hand, look in those loved eyes (though for the last time), and I will go.’ ”

“ Poor Hildegard could not resist ; in a moment they were locked in each other's arms. Suddenly the sound of the convent bell was heard, and the lights were visible.

“ ‘ Farewell, dear Rupert—farewell for ever ; we shall meet no more on earth ; my eyes will never again behold the face I love so well.’ ”

“ ‘ Hildegard, stay ; do not drive me mad ; fly with me ; am I not Rupert the brave ? Who dare harm you when by my side ? I would dare an army for your sake. Come, Hildegard, come ; in another land we may defy pursuit.’ ”

“ ‘Rupert, I am dying ; it would be useless. And have I not sworn before the altar, to abjure the world, and dare I break my oath ? Go in peace, forget your poor Hildegarde, whose troubles on earth will soon cease.’

“ Rupert reluctantly obeyed, and returned to his desolate home. The next day he heard that Hildegarde was dead. Soon afterwards he left the Rhine, the scene of his short happiness and long misery, to again plunge into the hottest of combats, and to find forgetfulness or death in the noise and hurry of war. Ere long he met with what he sought—a soldier’s death—and only the desolate tower remained to tell the lover’s sad tale.”

Harry was really touched by the romantic love story, related with much pathos and grace by the guide. His thoughts flew to his own Nelly, left by him as Hildegarde had been by her lover, and he inwardly prayed that God would save him and his beloved one from so melancholy a fate as the German lovers of old. The tale had almost lasted during the ascent of the Drachenfels, and they were now at its summit. Harry longed to be alone with his own emotions, and the sublime scenery around him. He bade the guide go first, and wait for him at Koenigswinter ; then, waiting till he had disappeared, he sought a quiet nook where he could indulge his teeming thoughts. He

caught sight of a little watch-tower apart from the ruined castle ; he approached it, and found that it commanded a superb view ; the tower was thickly covered with ivy ; in the centre was a stone seat, but he stood for some minutes contemplating the sublime prospect.

In the distance he could distinguish the tower of Cologne Cathedral rising through the vapour that enveloped the city ; at his feet flowed the Rhine through a rich variety of lovely scenery ; on the river were vessels of various burdens ; some rapidly carried along by the strong current, others being laboriously towed up to their destination ; heads of cattle were slowly wending their way down to the river. All was still, peaceful—yet grand. Harry sat long, contemplating the glorious picture, from which, however, his thoughts soon flew back to Dellcombe, and the dear one who was perhaps at that moment sadly lamenting his absence, and longing for tidings of his welfare and safety. He thought of the happy past—his merry childhood—his youth brightened by Nelly's love—and he felt that the attachment he cherished for her was enduring devotion—not romantic passion.

“ Yes,” he said, “ whatever may be my fate, hers must be united with it ; her lovely image is engraved on my heart, where I will keep and enshrine it as the most precious thing in life. If

my father should object to my marrying her, I will enter the life of activity I have so long sighed for, when, after a few years, I will return and claim her as my bride."

He rejoined his guide, and soon after they began slowly to descend the mountain, the little boat was again pushed out from the shore, and the stream soon carried them towards Bonn.

"Should Meinheer require a guide to go with him to Mayence," observed the man, as he respectfully took leave of his young patron, "I should be glad if he would engage me. I know the Rhine thoroughly, and every old tradition connected with it."

"Come to the hotel with me and I will tell you," said Harry.

But ere they reached their destination, they met Mr. Maxwell, looking better and more cheerful than he had done since his wife's death.

"Well, Harry, I hope you have enjoyed your morning."

"Indeed I have, I shall never forget it; surely this must be a place especially favoured by nature; I cannot imagine anything more romantically beautiful. It would make one a poet, or an artist to live here."

"I hope you will always be as susceptible of such feelings, Harry; the appreciation of such

beauties, is one of the best preservatives a man can have."

Mr. Maxwell readily consented to the guide's request to accompany them on their journey, and after a hearty luncheon, they started for Coblenz.

The sun was now freed from the thin mist that had hung round it during the morning, and was shedding its most brilliant beams over the autumnal landscape. Not a cloud was to be seen, the azure sky seemed to cast its own unbroken serenity on river, mountain, and dale, and to shed a new beauty on Harry's last glimpse of the Nonnenwerth, with its drooping willows, and its convent hallowed by poor Hildegard's sorrows and death. Koenigs-winter nestled in the mountain, and the beautiful vineyards looked brilliant and glowing with luxuriant beauty in the noonday sun.

"Really, my dear father," exclaimed Harry, "this is like enchantment."

"It is indeed glorious ; your rapture recalls the impression it made on me three-and-twenty years ago, when I, like you, was young and enthusiastic, and then, when I took your dear mother from her home, and brought her proudly to England as my bride ; it was here, by this lovely river, that we passed our honeymoon, a time only less happy than the years which followed it, but now, all is over, she is gone before, and my only hope is to rejoin

her ere long, in the land where we shall never part."

"No—no—dearest father, you must not talk thus, we can never cease to grieve for her, but still, I hope many happy years are before you yet; I only regret we took this route to Frankfort."

"My wish was to come this way, Harry. It is true the place brings back old recollections, and your dear mother's memory yet more vividly to my mind, yet it recalls bright and happy associations also, which will ever be my most sacred and cherished souvenir of the departed."

Few words were exchanged after this between father and son, and as they neared Coblenz, the day was departing, and the twilight threw an indistinct and magnifying shadow over the landscape around.

It was arranged that Harry and his guide should continue their journey on foot the following morning, and wait for Mr. Maxwell at St. Goar.

The young man was up almost with the dawn, eager to begin his day's pilgrimage, and the guide willingly entered on his duties to so ardent and kind a patron.

The first visit of the day was made to the Bride of the Rhine, certainly very inferior to the river with whom she is supposed to be wedded. They did not remain long in Coblenz, and were soon



again by the side of the river of rivers. Ere they had proceeded far, the noble castle of the Stolzenfels broke upon their view, unequalled in beauty and position, towering high, and making everything near it look insignificant, but deigning to cast a grand, protecting glance on the dilapidated tottering ruin before it. The slopes of the mountain were richly covered with vineyards, and the grapes hung in heavy luscious bunches on the vines, tempting the hand of the passer by their rich beauty; village girls flitted to and fro in the pretty and picturesque costume of their country, carrying baskets of fruit gracefully poised on their heads, their fair hair hanging in thick luxuriant braids far below their waists, tied at the end with gay coloured ribbon. Then came the sound of bells, and donkeys approached fantastically decorated with scarlet tassels, mingled with bright bells, bearing their market burdens, their drivers singing merrily their melodious national airs.

The river flowed proudly onward, and the gentle zephyr mingled its soft breath with the fragrance of the flowers, and the song of the birds rose gratefully to Heaven; all was joyous harmony and beauty. And now perhaps the greatest wonder of the Rhine appeared. A floating village, with cheerful fires, tables loaded with provisions, and surrounded by numbers of men, women, and children, made its

appearance. Dozens of gingerbread cottages were erected on this huge raft of timber, tenanted by what might well be termed amphibious residents. Harry's eyes followed this curious construction so long as it was in sight with unfeigned and amused surprise.

Every moment the young man dreaded that the solemnity of the scenery around would diminish as they proceeded, but, as all who have taken the same journey will confess, such a fear was groundless. The grandeur and beauty of the country rather improved than lessened as they went on, till at last they arrived at a point, where by a singular and happy delusion the traveller believes his course is ended. But it is only to find that the apparent obstacle is a pass, which discloses the grandest panorama of the Rhine. The rocks hung over the water in gigantic and romantic grandeur, arching and protecting, as it were, the noble river beneath. Harry threw himself on the bank in speechless admiration, and seizing a pencil, wrote in his pocket book the following impromptu—

“ One summer morn, when all was still
And the sun was gilding the vine clad hill,
The zephyr's soft and gentle breeze
Was scarcely heard in the Alpine trees.

Between two rocks of dizzy height,
Whose frown was dark as winter night,

The river wound its way along,
Blending its voice with the sweet bird's song.

By the banks of this swift stream
The delicate blue bells softly dream,
And the feathery moss, of many hues,
Welcomes the night's descending dews.

To linger in a scene like this,
Sipping the joys of nature's bliss ;
Ah ! ever here I'd wish to dwell,
"Twere not for her I love so well."

"Yonder little ruin," said the guide, when Harry had replaced his pocket book, "is called the Sister's Tower, and the larger ruin at the top, the Schwarzberg, and the baron who once possessed it was known as "Bruno, or the Black Knight," from the dark armour he wore, and his still darker deeds. Meinherr, however, must be tired, he had better rest a little, for we have already walked many miles, and I can better relate the story at the Schwarzberg itself."

Harry not unwillingly took the hint, and they entered a pretty little inn, bearing the sign of the Black Baron, where he ordered dinner for himself and his guide. He did full justice to the meal, for he was both hungry and fatigued, and when he had finished he threw himself on a rustic bench to enjoy the view. The guide, however, soon summoned him to renew the journey, as they had to ascend the Schwarzberg before the day declined.

They traversed a beautiful vineyard, and then entered a small wood of dark firs, relieved here and there by a bright and feathery looking larch.

"Is any tale connected with this wood?" asked Harry.

"Oh yes, Meinherr. Everything has a story attached to it on the Rhine. This wood has been known for centuries as the Goblin's Grove. In this wood there was once a secret subterraneous passage, reaching to the Teufelsberg—(Meinherr knows of course that Teufel means Devil)—a strong castle about two miles off, held by a band of robbers, by whom the secret of the entrance to this passage was carefully kept. Consequently they were always able to elude pursuit. Ah! many a dark and fearful deed has been perpetrated in the Teufelsberg, but not a vestige now remains of that once impenetrable castle. One night two hundred men flying from pursuit entered this passage, with the exception of one. But before they reached the stronghold of the Teufelsberg, the earth above them gave way, burying them all in its ruins, and their bones still remain there. The man who so remarkably escaped the fate of his comrades, was the leader of the bandits. Six of his sons were amongst the buried; his castle was fired and burnt to the ground. A few years afterwards a solitary individual made his appearance in the wood, and for years lived only

on herbs. His hair and beard were of such length as almost to cover his body, and the people round, thinking him deranged, never molested him, and indeed his wild look terrified most effectually any one who came near him.

He existed in this manner for nearly twenty years, unmolested, holding converse with no one. During one fearfully stormy night, however, at the end of that period, when the lightning flashed, and the thunder shook the mountains, the wood appeared in one blaze of fire; and on the following morning when the villagers went to ascertain the damage it had sustained, there was not a vestige of it, nor of the solitary individual who had inhabited it for twenty years.

"Who was this solitary wretch?" asked Harry; "though I think I can guess."

"He was the Baron de Teufelsberg, Meinherr, as you doubtless have imagined. In process of time young trees sprang up to replace the havoc that had been made, and I have heard that finer firs are not to be found anywhere."

"They are quite gloomy enough," said Harry, "to have been associated with such fearful deeds."

"The wood was for many years the terror of the villagers," continued the guide, "and even to this day many of them avoid it if possible."

As he concluded the short story of the gob-

lin grove, they emerged from the dark shade, and traversed a winding path, where a magnificent palace or fortress (for it could scarcely be called a ruin, though it bore marks of many a formidable siege) met their view. The keep stood forth, like a valiant warrior, guarding his weaker comrades. It had no other roof than the dome of heaven, the windows were shattered, the turrets looked tottering and decayed, many of them indeed had entirely given way, and found a resting place in the mountain's lap. But the grandeur of the prospect was magnificent. It commanded a view of the distant yet neighbouring castles, with which the Rhine is so thickly studded, and of all the fair country for many miles round.

"Now for your legend," said Harry, when he had feasted his eyes with gazing.

"It is a short one, Meinherr, but you shall have it. Centuries have rolled away since the black flag of the Barons von Schwarzberg waved on the top of yon ruinous keep; bearing their badge of the cross swords. The castle was the dread of every vessel that sailed up and down the Rhine, for the unfortunate captains well knew that as they passed its frowning towers, the lawless Bruno, then baron, would demand his black mail. A hundred men, the finest in the whole country, were kept day and night in full armour, as guard of the castle, while



double and treble that number were at his command. The Schwarzberg was built by the grandfather of Bruno, who was murdered by his eldest son. The cruel and barbarous deeds of these barons have been handed down to posterity, and they have become part of the history of the Rhine. The Baron Bruno was a very handsome man, and there is still to be seen a picture of him at Mayence, (and if it is to be trusted,) he was tall in stature, fair, and with a countenance expressive of anything but the character which is assigned to him. Indeed, tradition says that he was somewhat less morose than his ancestors. He was an only child, and when he was but eighteen his father died, leaving him all his large possessions. One day he was hunting the wolf in the woods with his followers, when he met a small retinue coming from the castle of Tannenberg; they were on their way to meet the old and valiant warrior, Baron von Tannenberg, who was that day expected from Palestine, after an absence of ten years at the Holy Wars.

The hunters had come so unexpectedly and suddenly upon their small party, that one of their horses took fright, plunged violently, threw its rider, and then tore madly on its course; that rider was the baron's fair daughter, the beautiful Ludmilla. The accident happened within a short distance of the Schwarzberg. Bruno, who had flown to the

lady's side, seeing her fall, found that she was happily more frightened than hurt. Her hat had fallen from her head ; her golden ringlets drooped in heavy clusters over her lovely face ; and Bruno's heart was caught at once. He was madly, wildly in love with the beautiful Ludmilla, even at the first glance. He begged her followers to convey her to his castle ; but they dared not comply, well knowing the hatred the Baron nourished for the Lord of Schwarzberg. Ludmilla, fixing her large blue eyes on the countenance so anxiously bending over her, exclaimed wildly—

“ My dream, my dream, it is he.”

“ Oh, lady, speak,” said Bruno, “ what dream do you allude to ? have you ever seen me before ?”

Ludmilla blushed, and cast down her eyes, terrified at what had already escaped her, and before he could urge his question the sound of distant music was heard coming nearer and nearer ; then the noise of horses' hoofs, and the clang of armour was distinctly audible.

“ The Baron comes,” was the cry, and the whole of the retinue rushed forward to meet him, totally forgetting the situation of their young mistress.

Bruno signed to his own followers also to withdraw, leaving him alone with Ludmilla. Then throwing himself at her feet, he said :

“ Fairest of women, Bruno Von Schwarzberg

woos you for his bride, to share with him his wealth and rank. Will you consent, sweet Ludmilla?"

The young girl was so bewildered and surprised by this sudden and unexpected outburst that she could not utter a word; and before Bruno could repeat his passionate entreaty, the cavalcade was close upon them. The old baron's eye fell on the young lord, with one of his darkest frowns.

"My father, my dear father," cried Ludmilla, springing to his arms.

"My child, here; alone with the lawless Von Schwarzberg," was the grave reply.

The accident that had occurred, and its consequences, were explained, and Ludmilla was once more seated on her palfrey, which a page had caught and brought back.

The party then moved off. Bruno stood motionless as a statue, watching the disappearance of the lovely lady and her father—his implacable enemy.

His eyes looked wild and unnatural, and the blood oozed from his lips, which in his agitation he had severely bitten.

"Ludmilla Von Tannenberg shall be my bride ere another day dawns," he said. "I have sworn it."

That night, disguised as the blind guide of a wandering minstrel, he got ingress to the castle of

Tannenberg, and soon the minstrel and he were invited into the great hall, where sat Ludmilla, with several other ladies. The minstrel began in noisy strains his song of chivalry ; then followed softer and sweeter melodies, the lays of love such as Ludmilla had never heard before. When the minstrel ceased, she approached, and thanked him for his sweet music. At that moment Bruno whispered something in her ear, that made her start and turn pale.

"Follow me, sweet lady, but to the door, and all will be well, I have hundreds of my retainers at hand."

"I cannot," said the trembling girl, "leave my father's castle, therefore depart at once, for I cannot go with you."

No sooner had she uttered these words, than he threw off his disguise, caught her up in his arms, and flew like lightning from the castle. He passed the tower keepers unmolested, they were speechless and powerless with fright at this unexpected apparition. So sudden and rapid had been this daring abduction, that the Baron, who was conversing with his friends at the upper part of the hall, was not aware of the deed, till too late to stop their flight. They were quickly pursued, but in vain. Bruno arrived at the Schwarzberg, where a priest was waiting to join their hands. Ludmilla never had cause to regret her marriage, for though cruel

and revengeful to every one else, his devotion to herself made her a happy wife. She lived not, however, many years to enjoy his love, for in the fourth year of their wedded life, she died, leaving two children, Conrad and Bertha. Bruno's grief was so great at the loss of his wife, that he went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and remained many years in Palestine. On his return, he found his daughter Bertha, whom he had left an infant, grown into a lovely woman, Conrad, his son, a handsome youth. These children had inherited their mother's sweet nature which pleased their father, at least so far as the daughter was concerned, but he would rather the son had partaken more of his own disposition. From this difference of temperament, father and son were never much united. Whenever his father invited him to join the hunt, or sports of any kind, he always found an excuse for declining, for such amusements were hateful to him. Books and deep study were to him the greatest pleasures of life. He was called "the philosopher" at twenty years of age. This brother and sister were beloved by all who knew them; as much as their father was detested, for since his return from Palestine, he was more cruel and oppressive to the poor than he had heretofore been. He would exact money from them unjustly, and if unable to satisfy his demands would seize on their flocks

and herds, or anything of value they might possess.

The Schwarzberg was no longer the peaceful home it had hitherto been for Conrad and Bertha, and the only retired place they found to linger in, was a deserted watchtower by the river. This place they dearly loved. Conrad had discovered the dangerous and rocky current of the river, and on tempestuous nights, when the cries of poor helpless mariners met his ears, he would rush from his retreat, launch his boat, and manfully bring his vessel through the rocky pass. It too often happened, however, that the very persons he thus saved from death, and the sailors who were rescued from shipwreck, would be subject to his father's exactions, and lightened of half their cargo for the black mail. This unlawful tyranny was so hateful to Conrad's generous nature, that he determined to quit his father's castle, and the world, and seek peace and repose in the bosom of holy church. He also strove to persuade his sister to become a nun.

"Yes, my brother," said Bertha, "I will retire to the holy convent, for how could I remain here without you. Through life you have been my only guide and companion. I have followed your path, I have enjoyed your counsels, your sympathy, since my childhood; you have taught me, dear Conrad, to love and fear the merciful Creator. Without

you this glorious world, on which the sun now shines so brightly, would be to me, a barren desert, and my soul would yearn for my dear Conrad's love and protection. We will leave the world together, and may our souls be re-united in Heaven."

It was eventide; the brother and sister were fondly clasped in each other's arms, and all within and without the castle was hushed in profound silence, when suddenly a fearful noise echoed through the hall, and heavy footsteps were heard ascending to the turret where they were sitting. They started up in terror.

"Hark, Conrad, what is the matter? oh, save me," exclaimed the terrified Bertha.

"Hush, dear, I will see what has happened; be calm, Bertha, I will protect you with my life."

He descended the stairs, and what a sight met his eyes, as he entered the great hall. Stretched on a bier lay the corpse of his father, surrounded by his retainers—he had that day fallen from his horse, while hunting the wild boar, and was killed on the spot.

All was changed at the Schwarzberg, for Conrad the good, as he was called, was now baron. Instead of the dark banner with its dreaded badge, a white flag, displaying the holy cross, under which was a dove with an olive branch. The few retainers, still kept, no longer wore the black armour,

Conrad and Bertha had no longer cause or desire to retire from this beautiful world, until they should be summoned by Him who gave them being. For many years they lived in peace and happiness with all men, and ever after they were spoken of as St. Bertha, and St. Conrad. While they lived the Castle went by the name of the Pilgrim's rest, for here the poor always found food and shelter in passing up and down the Rhine, on their pilgrimages."

As the guide finished this interesting narrative, Harry saw a carriage stop at the little inn below, and concluded that it contained his father. He therefore hastily descended the mountain, and at the door of the Black Baron he saw Mr. Maxwell just coming out in search of him.

"I hope, dear father, you have not found the journey long or lonely."

"Not at all, my dear boy. I have really enjoyed it. You have had a lovely day for your pedestrian tour."

"A day, I shall never forget," said Harry, warmly.

As the eye which has been gladdened by the rays of the glorious sun, and which is scarcely aware of its decline, until the objects which it has gilded, become fainter and more obscure in the twilight, or the ear on which a strain of delicious melody has



fallen to delight the heart with its soothing sounds, and then gradually faded away in distance, so felt our young hero, when he crossed the bridge of boats at Mayence, and quitted the glorious scenes we have described. He looked anxiously for new beauties, but in vain, for all was changed. The scenery became more and more uninteresting, and every mile they travelled only removed him further from the romantic region he had traversed. Again, his feeling found vent in verse, and the following simple lines were the natural expression of his unsophisticated regrets.

“ Farewell, enchanting Nature,
Adieu, oh, mountains bright,
And thee, thou lovely river,
Taking thy wayward flight.

“ Once more by thy side I wander
Surrounded by flowrets gay,
Where the voice of the breeze is heard,
And then dies softly away.

“ Soon will thy beauty wither,
Like gold thy trees now shine,
For the summer fast is flying
Away on the wings of Time.

“ Mine eyes with tears are flowing,
For thou and I must part ;
Thine image shall ever dwell
Enshrined within my heart.”

CHAPTER X.

WE must now leave our travellers to conclude the brief remainder of their journey, while we turn to more home-like and domestic, but not less attractive scenes, and we would fain hope the reader is sufficiently interested in Nelly to feel anxious to know how she bears the trying ordeal of hope deferred, and the absence of him whom she dare scarcely yet call her betrothed husband.

Happily for the young girl, thus early exposed to these secret troubles, there was one near her equally able and willing to give all the comfort and aid which she so peculiarly needed, and which her mother's own trials prevented her receiving from her natural guide and comforter.

Keziah Bright, the doctor's daughter, was pre-eminently the friend most adapted for a young creature like Nelly. Though some thirty-two years of age, and still unmarried, there was nothing old maidish or unpleasant about her. She had



been very lovely, and was still a handsome and attractive, woman, quick to sympathise with sorrows she had herself lately known, and into which she could still most fully enter. Miss Bright's story was a sad one, though no one would have imagined from her sweet placid face and cheerful manner, that she had ever suffered so long and so deeply, as her friends knew had been the case. Some fifteen years before, when she was only seventeen years of age, she had been on the point of marriage with young Charles Bury, the son of a rich squire at Burnsley. Charles was a keen sportsman, devoted to all field sports and exercises, and preferring the society of his horses and dogs to that of the fair sex, his betrothed Keziah excepted. But as Keziah knew this, before she accepted him, she had, of course, no ground of complaint, and though his visits were perhaps rather short and unfrequent for a lover, he would very often rush into her drawing-room in hunting costume, fresh from the field, she never doubted the strength of his attachment. Charles himself was a different creature in Keziah's presence; gentle, quiet, and attentive to every wish, but the instant he was among his usual companions and sports, he was one of the noisiest and most reckless on the field. Time went on; the wedding day was fixed, and at last arrived. The 29th of June was bright and lovely

as a bridal morn should be. The whole village of Dellcombe was astir to honour the wedding day of its chief beauty and pride. The church bells were ringing a merry peal, the village children dressed in holiday attire, stood in the churchyard ready to strew the bride's path with flowers, and the procession was momentarily expected to arrive. A pause in the church bells allowed the chimes of eleven o'clock to be heard, and expectation was on tip-toe, but still they came not.

Meanwhile the guests were becoming impatient at the non-arrival of the bridegroom, and whispers and looks of surprise began to be exchanged. The bride (with her father and bridesmaids), looking most bewitchingly lovely in her white dress and veil, was each moment becoming more tremblingly expectant and alarmed at the delay.

"What can it be, papa?" she said at last, placing her hand on her father's arm, as he stood gazing anxiously from the window. "Something must have happened."

"Do not alarm yourself, my dear child. Charles has been detained accidentally; he will be here immediately, no doubt."

Twelve o'clock struck, and Keziah could no longer control her terror. She sat, white as her dress, and speechless as a statue, while her bridesmaids vainly attempted to comfort her! and Dr.

Bright alternately went to the guests to exchange a few sentences of courtesy and regret at the *contre temps*, and soothed and comforted his stricken child, though his own heart sadly misgave him.

Suddenly horse's hoofs were heard galloping up the entrance to the house.

"Here he is at last," was the cry, and a rush was made to the windows and doors, to ascertain the cause of the delay.

Keziah, too, heard it in the inner room, where she sat, but she did not move. A presentiment of the truth seemed to possess her.

A stranger entered the room where the guests were assembled, and announced—

"I wish to see Dr. Bright alone," he said.

The physician led him from the room, but as they passed the door of the bride's apartment, the white form, and pale lovely face of Keziah appeared.

"Papa, what is it? I must know. Is he dead?"

A glance at the stranger's pitying awe-struck face was sufficient answer, and the girl fell as if struck with catalepsy, motionless and rigid in her father's arms. The truth was soon told, after the mourning bride had been conveyed to her room, and restored to some degree of consciousness. The stranger, who was known to Dr. Bright, though not to his daughter, had been riding under the

black craig, when his horse made a fearful plunge, and nearly threw him into the river. He dismounted, and turning the frightened animal, began to search for the cause of its sudden alarm. For some time he could see nothing to account for the horse's restiveness, but when about to leave the spot, his eyes fell upon something lying under a hedge. He approached, and to his horror, discovered it to be the lifeless form of Charles Bury, lying by the side of his horse, which was also perfectly motionless. It was evident that the horse had run away, in crossing the moor, and leaped over the craig, to the mortal injury of himself and his master.

"I know," continued the gentleman, "that he was to be married to your daughter, and judged from his dress, that this might probably be his bridal day. In his hand, too, was this lovely bouquet, which was, I doubt not, intended for his bride, and which he clasped tightly even in death."

Dr. Bright took the flowers in his trembling hand, and large tears rolled down his cheeks as he carefully placed them in his *escritoire*; and then, after warmly thanking the stranger for his kind and considerate sympathy, he dismissed the now melancholy crowd of guests, and returned to his afflicted child.

For days Keziah spoke not, then brain fever

set in, from which her recovery was for some time despaired of ; and then, when she began slowly to regain strength, her considerate father arranged for her to have a complete change of air and scenery, and sent her on a visit of some months to an aunt in Derbyshire. She returned calm and resigned, and from that time even Dr. Bright himself could scarcely decide whether his daughter's cheerfulness and active interest in the joys and sorrows of all around was natural, or assumed from affection to him, and desire to set his heart at ease. But Keziah's heart was true and constant, if her spirit was brave. While in Derbyshire she had won the deep and lasting affection of one worthy of her, and just before her return he had, to her great surprise, told her how dear she was to him, and asked for her heart and hand in return for his love. She told him gently, but firmly, that her heart was with the dead, and that she would never marry, while her affections were thus indifferent to all. The lover was terribly cut up at the decided, though kind, refusal ; but he was soon called away to the stirring and active exercise of the duties of his profession, and Keziah heard of him no more. From that brief sketch of Miss Bright's story, it will be supposed that she was a most valuable and delightful companion for our little heroine, and fortunately Keziah's visits to the Grange became very

frequent, from regard and inclination, as well as from kind and disinterested sympathy with the Miles' family.

"Well, darling," she said, as some short time after the departure of the Maxwells, she entered the Grange garden on a beautiful autumn day; "I have come to spend the afternoon with you, and remain to tea, if you will have me."

"We shall be delighted," said Mrs. Miles.

"And I have brought a book to read to you," returned Keziah: "the very thing for such an afternoon—nothing melancholy in it, but quite an interesting, pretty tale."

"Dear Miss Bright, how kind you are," said Nelly. "You are always contriving something to cheer us, and console my dear mother. What should we do without your visits to us? We should be so lonely."

"I don't intend you should do without them, little flatterer, and so come and sit under those thick trees, for it is dreadfully hot—the most oppressive day we have had this season, I think."

The adjournment was soon agreed to: Mrs. Miles took her knitting, Nelly her work, and Miss Bright her book; and a very picturesque group the three made—each attractive in their different styles. The birds were basking in the sun, flying here and

there, and a few, more bold, came close to the young ladies.

“Ah,” said Keziah; “did I ever tell you that curious incident of the robin? No—oh, well, then, I will relate it before I begin to read. It is my habit to throw out some crumbs every morning after breakfast for the birds; and there is generally an amusing fight among them for the booty. One, less timid than the others, came one morning into the room, and as I encouraged its visits, it became so tame as to fly on my shoulder. I missed my pretty guest, and as its visits were discontinued for some time, I imagined the little creature was dead, and felt really grieved. One day—my window happened to be closed—I heard something tap against it, and, on looking out, saw my little friend the robin, waiting to be let in. I, of course, opened the window, and in it hopped, chirruping as if really pleased to see me again. It immediately flew to its favourite perch on my shoulder, but it appeared restless and uneasy, and kept flying in and out of the room. I took no notice, supposing it was some unaccountable caprice, but at last I heard a faint twittering, and going to the window, I saw the robin doing all it could to coax a young one into the room. It could scarcely fly, and had evidently only just left its nest. The old one was exceedingly patient with it, and by degrees drew it

nearer and nearer the window, and at last brought it into my presence in triumph, and then flew on my shoulder, delighted with its success. Since then both have been my daily visitors, and I quite look forward to seeing them every morning."

Nelly was exceedingly delighted with the anecdote, and after some discussion of the habits of their feathered pets, Miss Bright began to read, and continued with brief intervals, till tea was brought out, and laid under the shady trees.

"Upon my word, you look very comfortable here," exclaimed a cheerful voice. "I intend, if you please, to join your party, for I am hot and thirsty."

And Dr. Bright—for it was he—approached the little group, and received a cordial welcome.

"Come and sit here, dear doctor," said Mrs. Miles, and Nelly will give you some tea."

"I hardly expected you home so soon, papa," observed Keziah.

"So, I suppose, my dear, you thought you would leave the house to take care of itself," observed the doctor, good humouredly.

"Oh dear, no; Mary was at home, though I had given Eliza a holiday," said Keziah. "Surely she has not gone out in my absence?"

"I believe she has, my dear. She was not at home when I left, and John was out in the orchard."

"We must really part with that girl, papa," said Keziah, with unusual irritation. "She is too provoking."

"Never mind, my dear; we will not destroy your comfort by thinking about her. I daresay nothing will be wanted, so don't annoy yourself."

Tea was concluded cheerfully, and then the doctor said,—

"By the way, I had a letter given me as I passed the post office this afternoon, and as it is from our mutual friend, the Squire, I will, with your permission, read it."

"Thank you, doctor, we shall be much pleased to hear the news," said Mrs. Miles, while Nelly bent her head over the work she pretended to inspect. The doctor began to glance over the letter, but ere long his face evidently betrayed alarm.

"Good God! what is this?" he exclaimed.

"Surely nothing has happened," exclaimed Mrs. Miles and Keziah in a breath. But Nelly spoke not; her breath came short and quick, and she gazed earnestly at the doctor.

"Why, yes—a good deal has happened, and I will read it aloud if you like."

"Do, papa. Pray do, doctor."

And then he read slowly and deliberately the account of the narrow escape they had had on

Shooter's Hill, and the mode in which they had been compelled to purchase their liberty.

"How dreadful, but what a mercy they escaped," was the general cry; but Nelly spoke not, and the hand which held her work trembled violently. A cold chill of apprehension had fallen on her young heart, and for the first time she began to realise the dangers of Harry's journey, and the probability that there might be other obstacles than even change of heart or opposition of parents to the happy termination of their love.

Fortunately for her, all eyes, save those of her friend Keziah, were turned on the doctor, and she managed to steal away, as she hoped, unobserved. She walked in an opposite direction, and almost ran to the rustic arbour which stood near the river (a place sacred to her, from its dear associations with one far away), and then gave way to grief, more bitter than any her heart had yet known. She felt as if the incident she had just heard was a foretaste of the evils and dangers which would beset her lover.

"Oh, my Harry, my Harry," she exclaimed, "I shall never see you again."

She fell on her knees and prayed God to protect him who had won her heart, and whose betrothed she was.

Keziah, who had observed her sudden change of countenance, and quiet gliding from the rest of the

party, soon followed her, and after a vain search in the house, returned to the garden, looking for the missing one.

“There is something beneath this,” she thought; “it is more than sympathy for an old companion’s misfortunes and dangers, which sent the blood from Nelly’s face. Her gentle nature might well be shocked by the narrow escape of the Maxwells, but that would not account for such extreme agitation. There is a warmer feeling than mere friendship here. Is it possible that she loves Harry? Why should she not? They have been much together, and were both young and sensitive. But if so, there is more reason I should endeavour to gain her confidence, for well I know the cruel agonies of secret love. It is like the tortures of the rack; the once joyous eyes become dull and heavy, the heart is torn by contending and changing emotions, and the mind tossed and troubled like a ship on the stormy ocean by alternate doubts and hopes and fears. And without some relief—some friendly bosom to rest on, the sufferer sinks under the burden of the anxiety it tries to hide.”

So thought the gentle and judicious Keziah, as she continued to search for her young friend in every part of the garden and orchard, but for some time in vain, till at length she thought she heard a convulsive sob.

"Nelly," she cried.

There was no reply, but the sound she before heard was repeated, and the next moment she came to the little arbour, and peeping in, she saw the girl on her knees, murmuring her lover's name.

"Ah! it is as I thought," was her idea, as she gently retired; "she does love him."

She withdrew noiselessly from the spot, and waited in silence for some time, but finding that Nelly did not appear, and catching from time to time the same sounds of subdued grief, she again entered, and gently breathed Nelly's name.

"Oh, Keziah, dear, why are you here? leave me, I entreat you, I had rather be alone," said Nelly, hiding her face as she best could, from her friend's observation.

"I am sorry if I startled you, dearest, but compose yourself, I think I know the cause of this violent grief; still I would rather you opened your heart to me freely, and frankly confide in me as a sister—you shall never regret trusting in my friendship and regard: and I shall not believe in your affection if you do not."

Nelly could not resist the loving entreaties of her friend, and nestling up to her, laid her head on her shoulder, and sobbed like a child, though more softly and gently than before.

"Come, Nelly, what is it?" again asked Keziah;
"it will relieve you to trust me."

"Not to-night, Keziah, I am not equal to it;
to-morrow I will tell you all—but I really feel ill
now, and should like to go to bed."

"Come, then, let us go."

The two girls left the arbour, and stole quietly
past the window of the room where Dr. Bright and
Mrs. Miles were sitting, and went up to Nelly's
little bedroom, where Keziah assisted her young
friend to undress, and placed her in bed.

"Now you are better, Nelly, are you not?"

"Yes, much more comfortable, dear Keziah,
thank you for your kindness."

"And you will promise me not to cry again?"

"Not if I can help it."

"You must help it, dear child—to-morrow we
will talk it over, and depend on it, all will be quite
right at last."

"Where is Nelly?" asked Mrs. Miles, at Keziah's
entrance.

"Gone to bed with a headache; she will be
better in the morning," said Keziah cheerfully.

"I had better go and see her then," said the
doctor. "Perhaps the heat has been too much for
her."

"No, dear papa, I think you had better leave
her quiet to-night; Nelly's attack is not a case

that needs your attention, and she begged me to wish you good night for her."

When her guests were gone, Mrs. Miles stole into her child's room.

"Are you asleep, darling?" she said softly, seating herself by her daughter's bed.

"No, dear mother."

"I am grieved you have had such a bad headache—it must have come on very suddenly."

"Please, dear mother, put your candle a little further from me," said Nelly, half fretfully; "I cannot bear the light in my eyes."

"Very well, dear. But, Nelly, only think of the poor Maxwells—is it not shocking?"

"Pray leave me, dear mother; I am tired and sleepy."

"Well, love, I will say good-night; I hope you will be better in the morning. Why, bless me, how hot your face is, you are very feverish—let me send Tom after Dr. Bright."

"I assure you, dear mother, there is nothing the matter that a good night's sleep will not cure—it is the heat that has knocked me up."

"Then good night, my love, call me if you are ill."

Nelly once alone with her own thoughts could look unrestrained on Harry's image, and again the sad forebodings she had tried to suppress, came

crowding on her mind. At last, however, kind sleep came to her relief, and her dreams were sweet and soothing. She was again locked in Harry's arms, her head resting on his manly shoulder, his voice spoke sweet sounding words, and again breathed those never to be forgotten words—"Nelly, you are my betrothed, and by God's keeping will be my wife."

Dream on, sweet child, and may thy visions always bring joy and peace to your young heart.

When she awoke the following morning refreshed and hopeful from her slumbers, she murmured to herself—

"What a happy night I have had, I heard him say. 'Patience, trust, hope.' Ah! dear Harry, I will for your sake practise all these virtues if I can."

"Who is there?" she said, as she heard a gentle tap at the door.

"It is only me," said Tom; "are you better this morning? My mother quite frightened me last night about you."

"Thank you, dear, I am much better; and shall soon be down to breakfast."

Tom went away much relieved, for his mother's account, joined to his own private suspicions of the interest his sister took in all connected with the Maxwells, had much alarmed him.

Meanwhile, after Nelly had somewhat recovered the dream-like effect of her visionary slumbers, she began to reflect on the events of the night before.

“ Ah !” she thought, “ the secret I have so carefully kept from all, I have now promised to share with another. I am almost sorry I have done so ; yet, it will be a great relief to unburthen my heart to so dear and trusty a friend, and let her see how much I am beloved.”

Nelly descended to the breakfast table, looking almost her own blooming, happy little self once more.

Some hours later that day, the two friends were seated together in Keziah Bright’s little private sitting room, their hands clasped in each other’s, and the faces of both indicative of the deepest interest in the subject of conversation. Nelly had hitherto been the chief speaker, though her little narrative had often been interrupted by Keziah’s questions, or her own bashful hesitation. At last, however, the short but important tale of love was told, and then she said earnestly—

“ And now, dear friend, you know all, promise me faithfully to keep my secret.”

“ I will, dear girl, but I wish there was no necessity for concealment ; did Harry tell you to keep your engagement secret ?”

“ No, at least, not in words.”

"Then why not have told your mother?"

"I hardly know, Keziah. I should like to do so, if you think I ought."

"Certainly I do. Did Mr. Maxwell know of your engagement?"

"I think not, I am not sure," was the hesitating reply.

"Well, dear Nelly, I hardly know in that case what to advise. I trust for your dear sake, all will end well. I doubt not Harry will be true to his word, he is noble hearted and honourable, and next month will be of age, and therefore his own master. I confess I doubt whether his father will readily give his consent to your marriage."

"Oh, Keziah," said Nelly, her cheek turning pale, "I could not bear that."

"Dear girl, you know true love seldom runs smooth, but I pray with all my heart yours may be an exception. Only do not rely too much on the future, or dwell on the idea that you are Harry's betrothed."

"But, Keziah, that would be to forget him."

"No, I do not exactly mean that; but I again say, do not rely too confidently on your future happiness."

"I cannot help it, dear Keziah," said Nelly, the tears starting in her eyes. "It is my daylight, my sunbeam, that keeps my heart illuminated and

warm, and without which I should be like a benighted traveller, who had lost the light of heaven, and was wandering in desolation, he knows not where. Oh, Keziah, I cannot give up my precious treasure."

"Keep it then, sweet girl," said Keziah, gently, "I can too well comprehend your feelings; for I too, Nelly, have known the joys of love, and trusted confidently to enchanting hopes, but its brightness was suddenly eclipsed."

She rose, and approaching a drawer, took from it a withered bouquet.

"This, love, is all that is left me of the happy past, sole reminiscence of my childhood's hopes. Those withered flowers were bright and fresh on the morning they were gathered by him who is now no more; they are like my hopes, Nelly."

"Oh, Keziah, how can you bear to look at them?"

"It soothes me, love. That bouquet was to have been my bridal one; and even in death, my lover clasped it in his hands. Heaven willed that we should be parted for ever in this world, and I have tried to submit meekly to what He has ordained. I know my Charles will not return to me, but I trust to go to him, where happiness is enduring, and change unknown."

"You are far better than I am, or ever could be, dear Keziah," said Nelly, kissing her friend with almost reverence.

"No, Nelly, you can and would do the same, though I hope you will never be tried by such disappointment and blighted hopes as mine. Still, I would warn you, by my experience, not to trust too much to the world's happiness, but put your confidence in God. If it be His will that Harry shall be your husband, He can bring it to pass. Leave all to Him."

"I will try, I will indeed, my beloved sister," said Nelly, still weeping: "for by that name I must ever call you. You have taught me a lesson I can never forget—God bless you, dearest, for your goodness to me."

* * * *

The footsteps of autumn were again slowly but surely advancing, but so gentle was its approach that its advent was still almost unperceived by man, or visible in nature. No storms or heavy rains, no early or untimely frost had accompanied the advance of the closing seasons of the year. The wild rose, the convolvulus, the feathery clematis were still blooming and entwined in each other's embrace; the boughs of the fruit trees dropped low with their heavy burdens, and nature was still glorious.

A day long and anxiously looked forward to at Dellcombe had now arrived. It was the Harvest Home. The last precious load was leaving the field; the horses were gaily decked with flowers

and evergreens, gorgeous red tapes hung from their white necks, reaching nearly to the ground, and at every step the bells jingled merrily.

A huge sheaf had been constructed with great care and pains, as a thank-offering to the Giver of all good, for His bounty in blessing the village with so abundant a harvest. As the waggon approached the village, the children rushed forward to meet it. As it stopped at the church the bells were ringing forth their cheerful invitation to grateful hearts to enter and offer up their thanksgivings. By eleven o'clock scarcely a person was to be seen in the village or fields ; all had flocked to the sacred edifice—men, women, and children, including the grateful widow and her two little ones, had hastened to obey the welcome summons.

The clergyman of the parish headed the little procession as it slowly advanced into the church. After him walked Tom Miles and two or three of the other principal farmers of the neighbourhood, bearing the huge wheatsheaf, of which we have spoken. They approached the altar with reverent steps, and deposited the offering, while the prayers of heartfelt thanksgiving were offered up. Then it was humbly removed from its holy resting place, and borne in like manner from the church, while many wondered who would be its fortunate recipient. The farmers slowly marched through the



village, followed by the little crowd of villagers, till they arrived at the poor widow's door, and there they deposited the offering. Blessed and precious gift; hallowed by God himself; for are we not told in Holy Writ, "Blessed is he that giveth to the poor, and careth for the fatherless."

The feast was to take place in a large barn, belonging to the Grange, and thither the crowd now wended their way. Nelly and Keziah Bright had been engaged for several days in decorating it, and well had they succeeded in their tasteful exertions.

The heavy doors were fastened back; festoons of flowers, wreaths, and evergreens hung over the entrance, and the interior of the barn was ornamented in the same manner. From the beams were suspended garlands woven by Nelly's fair hands. Long tables were placed down the centre laden with good cheer, and miniature wheatsheaves with gay poppies were their decorations.

"Well, Nelly," Keziah had said, as they surveyed their work, "I think we have been pretty successful. How lovely it looks."

"It is beautiful, dear Keziah. I do not think anything could have been better. Come to the top of the room, and see the beautiful effect. Look, dear mother; is it not charming from here?"

"Well, it really is, dear child, a perfect picture."

"Yes, and it is nearly all Keziah's doing."

"No, no, naughty child. I won't have you tell fibs. You know well the greater part is yours."

"Any way, it is most beautiful," said Mrs. Miles, "but see, they are coming now, Nelly, we must do our best."

The villagers now streamed in, the dinner hour arrived. Dr. Bright took the head of one table, the clergyman of the other. Tom Miles and some of the other farmers were at the other end, while the merry party placed themselves as they could; many of their daughters choosing to wait on them, instead of sitting down.

It is always pleasant to see harmony and good feeling between master and servants; on this occasion there was no restraint whatever; jests and laughter went merrily round, and when dinner was concluded, the tables were removed, and the amusements of the day commenced. A dais had been erected for the musicians, and Dr. Bright seating himself in a chair that had been placed for him, kindly produced his violin from a green baize bag, and proceeded to give his powerful aid to the band.

Country dances began, and all was joy and glee. Nelly looked dangerously beautiful in her simple white dress, a band of pale blue ribbon carefully tied round her waist, her softly beaming eyes, expressive of the delight she felt in the dance, for

which her hand was eagerly sought. What would Harry have said had he seen his betrothed so joyous in his absence, and bestowing her sweet smiles on the handsome young farmers? Would he have been jealous? In truth he need not, for one half at least of those bright smiles and that beautiful bloom might be attributed to a certain letter placed in the bosom of her dress, near to the girl's beating heart. Tom had slipped it into her hand as he passed her, with a knowing smile, and the handwriting and post-mark told her that it came from her lover, though she was fain to defer the examination of her treasure, till in the solitude and security of her own little room at night.

Tea was served in the meadow, and there they all repaired weary and exhausted with pleasure. Some found benches, others threw themselves on the grass, while the refreshing beverage was handed round. Snowdrop was the object of general attention during the meal, having made her appearance tossing her pretty head, and gazing round, as if conscious that she was the object of general admiration.

A variety of sports followed, and then the people dispersed to return to their own homes by the light of the harvest moon, while the Rector, Doctor Bright, and Keziah remained to take some supper, and talk over the proceedings of the day.

"I never saw such dancers in my life," said Dr. Bright. "If their feet are as tired as my arms, they won't care to resume the sport for a considerable time."

"Well," said Mr. Exby, "I believe they have thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and their behaviour was most orderly and unexceptionable."

"I don't believe there is a village in the whole county blessed with such well conducted people," said the Doctor; "and we have to thank you in a great measure, sir, for the privileges we thus enjoy."

"I have tried to do my duty, Doctor, and have every reason to be thankful for the result, but I am not the only one that has brought it about. Look at what the good squire, and our kind hostess, and Tom, and yourself, Doctor, have done for the people around. Believe me, dear Doctor, education is often the best preacher; without it, little can be done. People forget that these peasants possess souls and minds, and leave them uncultivated. Thus their ideas are contracted, their thoughts perverted, till they learn to know their Great Creator, and the duties he has imposed upon them."

"True, Mr. Exby, till that light breaks in on them they can neither feel nor think as they ought."

Supper was announced, but Nelly was missing.

"I will go and see about her," said Keziah, "I

do not want any supper, I expect I shall find the child quite knocked up, and ready only for her bed, so if I do not return, don't wait for us."

Keziah stole up to the little chamber, and softly opened the door, without even asking for admission. Her quick eye had seen the transmission of the letter from Tom's hand to his sister's, and she shrewdly guessed in what occupation her little friend was engaged.

Nelly was seated on the floor, having her elbow on the bed, her pretty face resting on the pillow, and a tear stealing down her cheek; a letter in her hand.

"What is it, darling? Harry has not written unkindly, has he?"

"Oh, no, Keziah, but how did you know?"

"Never mind. Tell me what has brought tears to the eyes that looked so bright just now."

Nelly hesitated.

"You will think me so foolish, Keziah."

"Very likely, but every one is foolish, when they are in love, so I shall not be at all shocked. Come, out with it. Is the letter too short, or not enough pretty epithets in it—or—"

"Oh, no, no," interrupted Nelly, blushing. "It is as kind as possible, and tells me all the wonderful things he has seen—and—and—that he has not forgotten me among them."



“Well, what is it then? something has vexed my little sensitive darling. Don’t try to deceive me, little one.”

“Well, then, Keziah, he says, just at the end, that a cousin of his, called Linda, has just arrived at his grandfather’s, and that she is very pretty and amiable, and—”

“You think she will steal away his heart, from the English village maiden, eh, Nelly.”

Nelly was silent, but her little heart beat visibly, and the tears flowed faster than before.

“My dear little sister,” said Keziah, kindly drawing the weeping girl towards her. “Do not torment yourself with idle and jealous fancies. If Harry’s love for you was real and true, a hundred Lindas and Minnas, and Brendas, would not steal him from you, and if it was not, better far it should be thus tried ere it is too late. Again I say, put your trust in God, Nelly, He can bring it to pass, and guide you and your Harry as seems best to His wisdom. You will be in endless torture, and offend your lover, if you thus easily mistrust him, at the least thing.”

Nelly remembered Harry’s words.

“There can be no love without confidence,” and began to reproach herself for her weakness and jealousy.

“You are always my wise and dear monitor,

Keziah. I will indeed, I will be good and quiet. But I cannot go down again ; I am too tired, I will go to bed."

"Very well, child. I shall make your excuse. Go to bed, and don't dream of Linda, but of your true love."

Nelly blushed and smiled brightly, and Keziah left her, well satisfied with the result of her kind admonitions, though she could not but confess to herself that the risk was not quite so trifling as she wished Nelly to believe ; and that a pretty, well-born cousin present on the spot, might well eclipse the memory of the beauty and charms of the sweet farmer's daughter, in distant Dellcombe. Time alone would show.

CHAPTER XI.

AT the close of a bright October day a heavy travelling carriage might have been seen passing under one of the old watch towers of Frankfort, in which were two travellers, both of them of the sterner sex. The head of the younger of the two gentlemen was close to the window, gazing eagerly at every object with a keen observant eye; the other reclined languidly in the carriage, as if overcome by some mental or bodily exhaustion. The carriage rolled rapidly on till it arrived at a large square white house, the windows of which were closely barred with iron, giving it anything but a cheerful aspect. Here it stopped; the valet jumped from the box, the post-boy eased himself in his saddle, and the heavy bell of the mansion sent forth a sonorous peal; quickly answered by some half-dozen servants dressed in deep mourning. Blacker fell back in respectful obeisance as an old gentleman came forward, whose long white hair was tied be-

hind with a piece of black ribbon, the ends of which fell down his back at some length. He, too, was attired in deep mourning; his cravat was arranged in deep folds across his ample chest, and his whole dress marked with the scrupulous neatness and precision of former days. His eyes, though small, were wonderfully quick and intelligent in expression; such eyes are never seen save when the intellect that animates them is acute and powerful. His form was tall, and still erect as a statue, rather than that of an old man bowed by the weight of eighty winters.

"Jump out quickly, Harry," said Mr. Maxwell, "there is your grandfather."

"What a splendid, noble-looking old man," thought the youth, as he assisted his father to alight, and gave him his arm to the hall.

Mr. Lindheim embraced his son-in-law affectionately—

"So you are here at last—I am truly glad to see you," he said; "and is this fine youth my grandson, poor Agnes' child? God bless you, my boy. I have long desired that my eyes should not close on this mortal world without beholding you."

The old gentleman held out his arms and enfolded the youth in his embrace to which Harry rather reluctantly submitted, for he was unused to such public demonstrations of affection, especially

from his own sex. But there was no appeal. First he was kissed on one cheek, and then on the other; then held out at arm's length, the old gentleman's hands fixed on either side of his face, and his eyes intently rivetted on his features. Then kissing him again with yet warmer tenderness, he said:

"How like,—how very like your poor mother—bless you, my boy, for her sake."

They now mounted a broad and elegant staircase, the walls of which were adorned with oil paintings, and entered a spacious drawing room, Harry's hand still tenaciously retained by his grandfather.

"There, my boy, sit down by me, and let me hear your voice, for as yet you have not spoken a word."

But before Harry could comply with the request he was folded once more to the old man's breast, and this time tears fell on his face.

"I must leave you for a few moments," said Mr. Lindheim, his lips quivering. "I cannot controul my feelings as some could; I will return soon."

"My dear grandfather," said Harry, anxiously, "compose yourself, or let me go with you."

"No, boy, no; let me be alone for a while, I shall be better ere long, it is only the first meeting that thus overpowers me."

Harry now began to examine the room more closely, and his eyes fell on a picture so like his poor mother, that he started with surprise.

"Oh! what a likeness," he exclaimed; "look, my dear father, it is my mother herself."

Mr. Maxwell could not reply; his head was buried in his hands, striving to overcome the sudden tempest of grief which shook him.

"My dear father, calm yourself, you must not give way thus. Take courage, and think of the blessing left to you."

"I will, my son, I will; I am sadly weak; but the place—the picture brought such a flood of memory to my mind, that it fairly overcame me. But I must be firm. I hear your grandfather approaching."

Mr. Lindheim now entered, followed by a servant, bringing two large silver branches containing lights; and matters began to look more cheerful.

Harry strove to divert the thoughts of both the mourners, by an animated description of the incidents of his journey, and the feelings it had excited in his mind.

"You will see more of it ere long, my boy."

"Indeed, sir—are we going back again so soon?"

"Not far from it, Harry."

The young man's eyes were incessantly wan-

dering to the various articles of art and vertu with which the saloon was literally crowded. The apartment was elegantly furnished so far as ordinary articles of use went; but the marble busts—old buhl cabinets, rich and fantastic china, and exquisite pictures made it an absolute study for a connoisseur, and the whole were reflected by large Venetian mirrors placed at intervals about the room. The curtains over the windows and doors were of the richest tapestry, while on the mantelpiece was an exquisitely designed clock and candelabra, of the time of Louis XIV.

“Come, my boy, you will have plenty of time to look about by and bye; but now William is wanting to show you your room, and I am sure you must be hungry.”

An hour afterwards the three gentlemen were seated at supper, and Harry had now an opportunity of examining the noble countenance and athletic form of his grandfather. He looked like a strong, stately oak, that had withstood many a severe storm, and summer heat. True the furrows in his cheeks and forehead were deep, but the small, dark eyes shone with the fire of youth, and lighted up his countenance like sunshine on an old ruin.

Mr. Lindheim was the richest banker in Frankfurt, and literally worshipped by the poor for his generous and considerate goodness. He had

founded schools and endowed hospitals, and the poor under his patronage might, indeed, be termed rich. Indeed, the good old man knew no sweeter pleasure than the guiding sympathies of active benevolence, and in a room under the very apartment where they were seated, were treasures and stores, ready for distribution on the following day. Truly the good banker obeyed the precept—"to do good and distribute; forget not."

"I am sure, sir, I shall like this city," said Harry. "I quite long for to-morrow to explore its quaint wonders."

"I am very sorry to begin our acquaintance by disappointing you, Harry; but to-morrow we must start for my place, Rosenstein. I am always there at the vintage, and have already delayed so long, in expectation of your arrival, that I fear the grapes may already be rather injured."

"Indeed, my dear sir, we shall be delighted to accompany you," said Mr. Maxwell, "I am only sorry to have put you to any inconvenience."

"Not at all, Charles, I am only too thankful for your visit. I wonder how you will like Rosenstein," he said, turning to his grandson, "I fear you may find it a little dull, though it is one of the prettiest castles in the country, and I have completely restored it from the ruined state in which it was when I bought it some years ago. But there is capital

fishing there, and besides, you will have a companion. I expect your cousin Linda in a few days."

Harry looked rather surprised; he hardly knew that he had such a relative.

"You have never seen her, have you, Charles?" questioned the old man. "She is a sweet girl, as like my dear Eva, as Harry is to her sister, your lost wife. Her father is called away from Berlin for some weeks, and Linda will be under my care during his absence."

Harry was scarcely as gratified as he ought to have been at the prospect of his cousin's society, but Mr. Maxwell expressed great pleasure at the certainty of seeing his niece, and the evening altogether glided away more cheerfully than might have been expected under the circumstances of the meeting.

When Harry passed through the drawing-room on his way to bed, he again stopped before the portrait of his deceased mother, and as he gazed on her saint-like face, he almost fancied she looked upon him from her blessed abode, so sweet and loving was her gaze.

"I hope you have slept well," said Mr. Lindheim, as father and son entered the breakfast room on the following morning.

"Very well, thank you, sir," said Harry.

"I fear you can hardly say the same, Charles;

for your eyes look heavy, and you are very pale."

"I was not so fortunate," replied Mr. Maxwell, smiling rather sadly. "The more I courted sleep the more it seemed to fly from me, but I shall be all right when I get into the fresh air. At what hour did you say we were to leave?"

"At noon."

"Then I shall have plenty of time to visit an old friend, whom I have not seen for many years. I will not keep you waiting, sir."

"It does not signify, Charles. We shall have plenty of time to get to the castle before dark. But I should wish you to stay, Harry, to assist me in performing a duty I have to fulfil before I leave."

"Anything I can do for you, my dear grandfather, I shall be delighted to perform."

Harry observed his father standing at the window after breakfast, in an attitude of profound melancholy, and approaching him he laid his hand tenderly on his arm.

"Dearest father, you are not well."

"I am not ill in body, Harry, only in mind; I shall be better when we leave this house. All here reminds me too forcibly of buried happiness. I could almost wish memory were blotted out for me, it is so exquisitely painful."

"What ! forget my dear mother ?" said Harry, half reproachfully.

"No, no, Harry. I would not do that, if I could ; but still, though I know all is ordained for the best, and bow to the Divine will, I cannot help regretting my lot every day more and more. I know I am wrong and rebellious in so doing."

"Not wrong, dear father ; but, indeed, you must allow time and change of scene to do their natural work, and then you will be able to think calmly of the past."

Mr. Maxwell pressed his son's hand, and went out of the room to prepare for his visit.

Harry and his grandfather then descended the grand old staircase that he had so much admired the previous evening. He was not a little astonished to see the large hall crowded with poor people, young and old, blind, lame, and suffering, at least a hundred in number ; and for each of these afflicted ones Mr. Lindheim had a kindly word as he passed. They entered a room where tables were covered with a great variety of clothing. On one table, apart from the rest, were small leather bags containing money, while three or four men-servants were busily engaged in allotting the various articles.

The door was thrown open, and the poor pensioners allowed to enter, about a dozen at a time.

They received their allotted portions, and a small bag of money, with heartfelt gratitude, and went away, their hearts overflowing with blessings on the generous giver. Then succeeded another party of recipients, and so on, till all the gifts had been distributed.

Mr. Lindheim seemed deeply affected with the scene, and when all was over, he said to his grandson, "Harry, I fear I am getting weaker. Those poor creatures' distress and gratitude seem to affect me more than it used to do. Perhaps this is the last time I may perform this duty, so long and often my greatest pleasure."

"God grant, dear sir," said Harry, fervently, "that your life may be long continued, a blessing to all around."

A short time after this drama had been enacted, Mr. Maxwell returned, and they entered the carriage. The post-boys were already in their saddles: a loud, cheerful crack of their whips, and the horses started at a brisk pace, drawing the vehicle with a merciless rattle over the stones of the old city. Many were the salutations from young and old, rich and poor, which they received as they passed rapidly along through the suburbs into the country, which is picturesque, though flat, in the neighbourhood of Frankfort. Fine old fruit trees, separating fields and meadows, here and there form-

ing beautiful avenues ; cottages with smiling gardens ; and in the distance the fine range of the Taunus mountains, with the sun shining brightly on their summits, formed a cheerful panorama. One peculiarity amused our young man greatly. At each cottage window appeared beds and pillows, put carefully out to air.

" You see," said Mr. Lindheim, " we Germans study health carefully. Are you as particular in England ?"

" I have never seen anything of the kind at Dellcombe," said Harry ; " but of course I cannot speak for the rest of my country. Are the Germans great hunters, sir ?"

" Yes, and very bold ones, too."

" Where do they chiefly hunt ?"

" Many places within ten miles of Rosenstein are great hunting fields ; and in the Westwald, the Sohnwald, and in the Taunus."

" What do they chiefly hunt ?"

" The wild boar, the wolf, and the deer."

" I should like a wild boar hunt beyond all things."

" Well, you may very probably be gratified before you leave Rosenstein."

The fresh breeze was now fanning their faces, the birds were singing gay carols in the sunshine, and the scenery becoming at every mile more interesting.

"What is the name of the place through which we have just passed?" enquired Harry.

"It is a new watering place, and abounds in mineral springs, supposed to cure every evil that flesh is heir to. Do you see that thin mist on your right? Beneath that flows the King of Rivers."

"What!" said Harry, starting up. "Is that the Rhine? Is it possible we are so near that noble river?"

They were driving by the side of a beautiful clear stream, rippling calmly along.

"If we were to follow the circle of this small stream, it would exhibit some wonderful sights."

"Where does it go to?"

"It flows some fifty miles through yonder dark forest, where the wild boar makes its den, and guards its young with savage fondness, and which is the resort of many other animals that have never left its dark precincts."

"I should decidedly like to follow the river, then," said the young man, laughing, "and see these novelties of nature."

"You would need not only to be well armed, but a most accomplished marksman, or there would be but small chance of your returning alive," replied Mr. Lindheim, who yet looked approvingly at the bold, ardent countenance of his grandson.

"I have been brought up in a hardy country,

my dear grandfather—among a race who scarcely know fear.”

The day was now declining, and as the air grew more chill, Harry drew a large rug over his father, who had fallen into a profound doze. The mellow rays of the setting sun were fast disappearing, and men, women, and children were returning homewards after the day's labour, seemingly quite happy and contented with their lot.

“Yonder is Rosenstein castle, Harry. You will have a better view of it in a few minutes. While we pass the wood, we lose sight of it entirely.” A sudden turn of the road brought them full in view of the castle, rising up, as it were, from the dark copse.

They ascended a craggy road, beautifully wooded on either side, but here and there the trees had been cut away to obtain a view of the surrounding country, which stretched far away beyond the Rhine. At last, however, they emerged from the shade of these stately trees, and stood on what might aptly be termed a pinnacle of land.

The carriage slowly crossed a moat about twenty feet deep, partly filled with water. The post boys sounded their horns: Mr. Maxwell started from his slumbers, rubbed his eyes, and apologising for his involuntary rudeness, declared he had enjoyed the sweetest sleep he had known for weeks.



"A good omen," said Mr. Lindheim, cheerfully. "Welcome, son and grandson, to Rosenstein Castle, where I trust you will remain long and happily as my guests."

They entered the court-yard, in the centre of which stood the keep, or watch tower, covered with ivy of many centuries' growth; and as they alighted from the carriage, a flag was hoisted on the top of the keep—a feudal custom always observed on Mr. Lindheim's arrival.

The hall, into which they were ushered, was low and peculiarly constructed. The ceiling was of oak grotesquely carved, the walls were covered with antlers of gigantic size; boars' heads were nailed beneath them, the small glass eyes following the beholder at every turn. Birds of prey (the vulture the most conspicuous), a hawk looking apparently with savage delight on the unfortunate bird he held within his claws; hunting equipments, mail armour, and many old weapons now in disuse, served to ornament the old hall, in a style well in keeping with its quaint aspect, and over the large fire-place was a fine old painting of the goddess Diana, equipped for the chase.

Harry turned to express his delight to his grandfather, but Mr. Lindheim was gone, as well as Mr. Maxwell, and the young man supposed himself

alone. He was returning with some slight surprise at their disappearance, to the objects around him, when his eye fell on a quaint-looking extraordinary figure slowly descending two or three oak steps in the outer hall. The daylight had now almost disappeared, and what with the strangeness of the scene, the wild glare of the animals around,—and his highly wrought romantic imagination, Harry could almost have believed that the figure approaching him was of another world, so apart from anything hitherto seen by him on earth. The arms of this apparition were extended towards him, but whether in entreaty, or warning, or tenderness, he could not decide.

As it came slowly nearer it seemed to him that the face and costume were certainly a century old. She was a woman, or at any rate in the form of one, attired in deep mourning; her short quilted dress displayed boots at least four inches high at the heels, tied in front with a huge bow of ribbon. Her arms and hands were covered with silk mittens, a deep frilled apron reached far below her dress, and she wore a large cap, the frills of which fell under her chin. Spectacles in tortoise-shell frame, and a stick ornamented with cord and tassels completed the costume of this singular being.

Harry inwardly wondered, while speculating on the position and errand of his visitor, whether all

the women of the country donned so antique and strange a costume—and feeling somewhat perplexed how to greet so novel a companion, looked round for a door through which he might beat a retreat, but the old woman was too quick for him. Slow as were her movements she had come nearer and nearer during his half-fascinated inspection, and now laid her hand on his arm, with a cry of mingled joy and grief which echoed through the hall like a voice from the grave.

“It is he—my child—my darling boy,” she exclaimed, throwing herself on the young man’s neck, no little to his discomfiture. “The son of my own foster child—my sweet Agnes. Did I not nurse her and watch over her like my own flesh and blood till she left me for a stranger and a stranger’s land, and you are her child, my angel Agnes’ child, and so like, so very like. And she is dead, she whom I took from her dead mother’s arms is gone to join her in heaven.”

Harry had luckily time during that outburst of lamentation, to recover his astonishment, and form some idea who that singular being could be.

“It must be my poor mother’s nurse,” he thought, “the old Frau Hoffmann, of whom I have heard her speak in terms of such deep affection and gratitude.”

He in his turn now embraced the strange little

form, which had been his beloved mother's resting-place in infancy, and kissed the withered cheeks against which that mother's face had so often been pressed.

"I know you now," he said; "you are the Frau Hoffmann of whom my mother so often spoke."

"Did she—did she? bless her," murmured the old woman, in the tongue which had been made as familiar as his native language to Harry by his German mother from early childhood.

The old dame's extreme emotion, and the embarrassment of his position—alone in that strange dark hall with this half spiritlike relic of a past generation—began to make our young hero extremely anxious to put an end to the scene.

"Will you conduct me to my grandfather?" he said, gently; "I fear he and my father will be surprised at my long absence. I did not perceive they had left the hall, and, of course, do not know my way to the usual apartments of the family."

But the Frau did not reply—her face was still working with emotion—her aged eyes still rivetted on his face. He repeated his question—no reply.

"Could she be ill? had her agitation been too much for her? was she deaf? or really the spirit which she resembled—a fit tenant for that dream-like hall, and ancient castle?"

Such were the questions which rose in the young man's mind, as he rather impatiently waited for some response to his request, and a change in his uncomfortable position.

At last he repeated his question in tones so loud that he quite started at the echo of his own voice.

"Oh, yes," she said, "yes—I forgot. But it is time yet—time yet. Here, take my hand, and follow me, for it is dark, and the stairs are steep and strange to you."

Harry followed his singular conductor's guidance down a dark corridor, at the end of which streamed a brilliant light from an open door, and as they approached it he perceived a large wood fire burning brightly, at the side of which his grandfather and father were seated, conversing, as he rightly conjectured, on times gone by.

The old dame conducted him into the room, still holding his hand as if fearful to lose one so precious the first moment of finding him. Mr. Maxwell appeared to have seen her before, for the only notice he took of her was by a kindly smile; and after a few moments' gaze at both father and son, she heaved a deep sigh; the tears rolled silently down her furrowed cheeks, and she tottered slowly from the room.

"I fear the joy of seeing you both will be almost



too much for poor old Brigitta," said Mr. Lindheim. "She quite adored your mother, Harry."

"The dear old Frau almost frightened me out of all sense," said Harry. "I thought one of the portraits had walked out of the frames when she came towards me just now. I could not have fancied anything so antique. How old is she, sir?"

"She has been in our family about seventy years. She was little more than a girl when she entered it."

"She must be about a hundred years old, then," said the young man, with a comical look of wonder.

"Scarcely, my boy—somewhere about ninety, I fancy. She was your dear mother's sole nurse, almost from her birth, and fairly idolized her, which makes her so excited about your arrival. But come, my friends, we have rested ourselves pretty well now, and must go and prepare for supper. Your rooms, Charles, are near mine, but you, my boy, will occupy the North Tower."

The party retired early—and Harry was conducted through a handsome suite of rooms which he was informed by the attendant were prepared for Mdlle. Linda, who was expected in a day or two. Then they mounted the principal staircase, hung with rich tapestry, representing in various scenes, the awful events of the Deluge; and after traversing a long corridor the servant stopped and threw

open the door of a large apartment, lighted by a cheerful wood fire. The man placed a chair before the dressing-table, lighted the thick candles which stood in massive candlesticks by the looking-glass, and respectfully inquiring whether he could assist him, bade him good-night, and retired.

Harry surveyed the apartment with anything but a feeling of satisfaction. It was heavy-looking and dull, in spite of the light of the fire and candles, which were, indeed, almost lost in the vast space of the room.

It was hung with tapestry very similar to that on the staircase, but in some places much faded, and worn by age. Over the fireplace was a fine picture, by Albert Durer, representing a bride. The windows appeared somewhat small-paned, but were deep, and contained large, roomy window seats.

"I doubt," thought Harry, "whether I shall ever really like this room; it is so gloomy—it quite oppresses me. How unlike my light, cheerful bedroom at the Manor. Everything looks so ghost-like in the imperfect light of the moon, which seems vainly struggling in through the tiny panes. I almost wish it would not show up those grotesque figures on the tapestry, with their hideous, grinning faces. I will light the lamp I brought, and examine matters a little more closely before I get into bed."

He lighted the small lamp he had carried through the long passage to his room, and was about to put his intentions into effect, when a sudden gust of wind blew it out. The tapestry moved to and fro at the same moment, as if some one was behind it, and he could not repress a vague feeling of alarm.

"What ails me?" he said to himself; "I was boasting of my courage but a few hours since, and now I feel as nervous as a woman. I am really ashamed of myself; but certainly the tapestry did move, most strangely."

He hastily finished his night toilette, and got into bed, but sleep was out of the question.

The moon for the moment played about near the picture over the fireplace, and gave a strange, life-like, yet pale look to the features of the bride. Harry could not take his eyes from it, though it made his blood creep to look on the fixed cold eyes.

Then came a low, distinct "tap, tap, tap." Harry rushed from his bed and flew to the window. The cause of the fresh alarm was soon visible in the person of an old owl, staring gravely into the room, and perched on the parapet, so obstinately, that Harry in vain tried to frighten it away. It remained in its place looking fixedly on him, its solemn eyes blinking and winking, but totally regardless of the displeasure and annoyance of the tenant of the apartment it was surveying.

Harry was half inclined to dress and leave the room in search of some quieter and more agreeable lodgings, but fear of ridicule, and, perhaps, of alarming his invalid father, should he accidentally stumble on his apartments, restrained him, and getting into bed again, he resolutely strove to forget his annoyance in sleep. Whether he succeeded or not he could scarcely tell; but it appeared to him that at some period of the night his door was opened, and some person—he could not tell who—advanced into the room, and stood motionless, staring at the picture of the bride. However, soon after this apparition—which by the way left the room as noiselessly as it entered, the young man fell into a sound slumber, and woke refreshed and quite cured of his night's nervous fancies at an early hour next morning.

“Good-morning, my boy.”

“Good morning, sir,” was the salutation between Harry and his grandfather, as the former came into the breakfast-room, his fine face flushed with youth and health, his large dark eyes sparkling, and an animated smile playing round his well formed mouth.

“You have been walking I see, and I should guess from the state of your boots that you have been exploring the forest. Is it not so?”

“I must apologise for my dirty boots, sir, but I

had walked farther than I intended, and I was afraid of keeping you waiting if I went to my room to change them."

"No apology is needed, my boy ; do as you please. This is Liberty Hall, as you say in England. When your cousin comes, you will, I dare say, be more particular about your toilette."

Harry coloured—he did not admire the idea of this unknown cousin—it seemed to interfere with his allegiance to Nelly to have another girl forced on his notice and attention.

"Where have you been, Harry?" asked his grandfather, seeing his grandson's embarrassment, and coming to the rescue.

"I hardly know, sir ; I woke early this morning after having had strange and desperate struggles, in my dreams, with bears and wolves, whose claws appeared ready to tear my very flesh. And then there was some one, I thought, in my room, and a more real and tangible visitor, in the shape of an owl, outside my window, that defied all my attempts to get rid of him most obstinately ; however, I slept very soundly at last, and found my way pretty early to the Court-yard, where I made friends with a nice, honest-looking lad, who told me his name was Ernst. I enlisted him in my service to guide me to the trout stream, which he seemed quite delighted to do. So we left the Castle about seven o'clock,

and following the river for about two miles, leaving the village on our right, entered the forest, and presently came to a rather wide river, which I found to be a capital trout stream. I staid there for some time, and had some very good sport. There are some first-rate trout there, sir—better than ours in England.”

“And then—”

“Oh, then we passed an old ruin, which Ernst told me was called Eberberg.”

“Did he tell you the legend connected with it?”

“No, sir.”

“Well, I will see if I can remember it some evening, though I am a poor narrator now; but I will do my best.”

“You will delight me very much by doing so, my dear grandfather. I like nothing better than listening to a really good legend. Well, as we returned we met several villagers going to the vineyard, from their breakfast hour, I suppose.”

“Ah, that reminds me,” said Mr. Lindheim, “I shall be expected there; we must go to breakfast. Where is your father?”

“I have not seen him this morning, sir.”

“Mr. Maxwell is on the terrace, sir,” said a servant who was bringing in some additions to the breakfast.

“Shall I go and tell him, grandfather?”

Harry was about to leave the room when Mr. Maxwell entered, looking fresher and better than he had done since his wife's death.

"You are better this morning, Charles, I see," said Mr. Lindheim, "and as to Harry, he is half naturalised already."

"I have found a first-rate trout stream, my dear father, and brought home some specimens for breakfast. See—are they not fine ones?"

"Capital, Harry; but they can scarcely surpass in flavour our Dell trout."

They sat down to breakfast; but Mr. Maxwell continued the train of thought his words had conjured up.

"Speaking of home, I rather wonder Dr. Bright has not written, as he promised. I want to hear how things are going on at Dellcombe. No doubt they are in good hands, but it seems a long time since we left. Poor Miles, too. I should like to know if he had been heard of."

"So should I," thought Harry; but he only said, "I dare say you will soon have a letter, sir, the doctor is a man of his word."

"Who is this, Miles?" asked Mr. Lindheim.

"A good, honest farmer, sir, who disappeared in a most singular way, and has not since been heard of. He left a wife, and son, and daughter, almost

broken-hearted ; but you said Mrs. Miles looked better when you last called, Harry."

"Yes, sir, almost like herself again."

"His son is scarcely so old as Harry," said Mr. Maxwell, again addressing Mr. Lindheim. "And yet he has taken charge of his father's farm, and manages it most wonderfully. He has had a capital crop this year, and is getting on in a manner really extraordinary for his years."

"And the daughter?" asked Mr. Lindheim, with a keen glance at Harry, whose face he thought betrayed some slight uneasiness.

"Oh, she is a pretty little creature, just getting into womanhood. She will be wanting a husband before long. I hope it will be a good one."

Harry could not quite prevent the tell-tale colour rushing to his cheeks ; but his father did not perceive it ; and if Mr. Lindheim's keen perception drew its own inferences from his grandson's confusion, he thought it was a mere boyish fancy, which would pass away when more refined and cultivated charms, like his cousin's, were placed in constant contact with him.

However, he thought it best to change the subject, and before long the three gentlemen were busily discussing the vintage and all belonging to it, and comparing it to the harvest and its festivities in England — and soon the rather hasty



breakfast was concluded, and Mr. Lindheim and Harry went off to the scene of action, Mr. Maxwell promising to join them as soon as he had written some letters.

On the following evening, as they drew round the wood fire, which the chill evenings of Germany made already acceptable, Mr. Lindheim volunteered the legend he had promised.

“Your cousin will be here to-morrow, Harry,” he said, “and as she knows it well, I may as well tell the story before she comes. I am not a good narrator, but I will do my best.

“Two hundred years have rolled away since the old ruin which you saw this morning was last inhabited. It was built by the Barons Von Eberberg, better known as the Barons of Sohn, for from that vast forest they derived their titles. They are all gone now, and their names only remembered from two circumstances ; one, the little tragedy I am about to relate, and another I shall speak of anon. The grave of the last and best of the family may now be seen in the old church-yard of Eberberg (his forefathers had been interred in the precincts of their castle) ; and while Otfried the good (for so he was called), has been mouldering in his lonely grave, the castle has been gradually returning to its mother earth. The unmerciful elements have proved terrible and irresistible enemies to the old

pile, and would if they could have spoken in plain language, said, ' You are a reminiscence of the dark ages, and an enemy to all, and now Time seeks revenge and will have it.'

" After many hard and desperate encounters with its invisible but powerful antagonist, it became so feeble that it ceased to offer resistance, and fell wearied into the dark and fearful dungeons beneath, where so many a plaintive cry has been breathed in vain, or echoed back in mockery on a wretched helpless captive's ear. Yes, it is a lesson which kings and nobles might well study—that evidence of the impotence of human power and human handiwork against the slow march and levelling hand of Time.

" In the year one thousand three hundred and sixteen (I think that is the correct date), there lived at Eberberg Castle a baron of that name, with his two sons—Otfried the elder, and Ritter the younger. The nature of the last named young noble was wicked in the extreme—he was a perfect Cain in disposition. The father was neither remarkable for one character nor another : he had done, perhaps, little harm in his day, but, I fear, less good. However De Mortuis—and my tale being rather connected with the sons than the father, I need not take up time by dwelling longer on him and his doings.

“However, before I leave him entirely, I must not forget to mention that his name was remembered for nearly two hundred years, as the founder of ‘The Wolf’s Revels,’ and as such cherished in the hearts of numbers of his countrymen.

“The two brothers, his sons, could never agree. Ritter’s hatred and contempt for Otfried was increased by the knowledge, not only that he was their father’s favourite, but the idol of the retainers. This was certainly more remarkable, as most of these vassals were wild and savage by nature and habit, and Otfried, on the contrary, mild and gentle as a lamb. Nevertheless, they preferred him to Ritter, whose disposition would have appeared more in unison with their own, or possibly the wish to stand well with the next heir to the barony might have something to do with their homage, for the baron was a very old man, and not likely to last long.

“Ritter’s hatred for his fortunate brother, aggravated by all these circumstances, was so intense, that it led him to perpetrate a cruel and savage deed of revenge.

“One day, when they were riding together in the forest, a poor unlucky swineherd made his appearance. Ritter, without saying one word, rode up to him and cut off his ears; then turning to his brother, with a diabolical smile of triumph pre-

sented them warm and bleeding to him. This savage cruelty was merely to commence a quarrel with Otfried, for he had determined to carry out that day his long cherished design of murdering his brother. But his plans were doomed to be frustrated on that occasion. A party of hunters suddenly made their appearance, and Otfried wisely joined their number, leaving his brother alone with his wicked conscience: but before he rode off, he signed to the wretched, maimed swineherd to follow him. No sooner were they out of sight, than he dressed the poor fellow's wounds, gave him money, and yet more precious, kind words: and then turning his horse's head into the thickest part of the forest, was soon lost to sight.

"Before he had gone far, however, his steps were arrested by the imploring voice of the swineherd, who was eagerly following him. The wretched vassal said he would go into the forest and dwell with wild beasts, for that the savage wolf and wild boar would do him less injury than the cruel Ritter, should he again fall into his hands. Otfried gazed with heartfelt pity on the wounded, mutilated creature, and assured him that from that time he would be taken into his service as his especial follower, for he had determined never to return to Eberberg, after the events of that day.

"Not more than six months had elapsed since

the event just related, when the solemn tower bell announced the death of the old baron, which was doubtless hastened by the loss of one son, and the ill conduct of the other. Indeed, many believed that Ritter had murdered both father and brother, but these suspicions were only breathed in cautious whispers, for the new baron's anger was as much dreaded as that of an evil spirit. He had usurped his brother's title, and seized on his possessions, knowing perfectly well that he had no right to them, unless there had been more proof of Otfried's death.

"Ritter in his youth had formed a fierce and passionate attachment for Brunhilda von Felsenberg, who returned his affection, strange as such a choice might appear. But she was compelled to marry against her will a rich and powerful knight, Rudolf von Hohenstein, whom she hated, and to whom she was not virtuous and well principled enough to perform a wife's duty. Ever since her marriage she had kept up a secret intrigue with Ritter, though her husband was exceedingly attached to her, and, as times went, might have been called a kind and tolerably just and well principled man. For the first five years of her marriage, Brunhilda had passed a quiet, and seemingly happy life with her husband, but at the end of that period there came an invitation from Ritter, requesting

the presence of both knight and lady at the Wolf's Revels, which were to take place on the first day of the new year. The husband was vexed and suspicious at the eagerness displayed by Brunhilda to accept the invitation, knowing too well that Ritter still cherished a strong love for his lovely wife. However, he generously determined to trust all to her honour, and we shall see presently how she requited his confidence. At the time the invitation was publicly delivered, a private note was given to Brunhilda by a confidential retainer of the baron's, unperceived by those around, the contents of which made her turn deadly pale. Her husband, who was standing at some little distance, perceived her sudden start and involuntary tremor, and rushed to her side; but she quickly slipped the letter into an embroidered sachet that hung at her side, and turned to meet her husband with a forced smile, all traces of agitation having disappeared from her beautiful face.

"At the moment, a lovely little girl ran up to them, and clung to Rudolf's knee: he took her in his arms, and gazed fixedly in her sweet face, and then turned to her mother with a wan look of pain in his face. She left the apartment quickly, only too happy to escape her husband's searching, reproachful glance. When she reached her own private turret, she took the letter from its place of

concealment, re-perused it, then committed it to the flames ; and, walking to a window, seemed to scan the lovely scene before her, until her eager eyes fell on the high turrets of Eberberg castle in the distance.

“ ‘ I hate Rudolf,’ she murmured, looking fierce as the tempter who prompted her evil thought. ‘ I hate him, and care not how soon he is out of my way ; but the child, she is as much mine as his, though she partakes too much of her father’s nature for me to feel even a mother’s love. Ah ! would she were Ritter’s ! Alas, what have I said ?’

“ And as his name rose to her lips, she started, and she thought she saw his form stand before her, and his voice murmur, ‘ Brunhilda, where is your strength of purpose ? I did not think you were thus weak and vacillating. He must fall : you must decide whether you love Ritter or Rudolf.’

“ ‘ Ritter, Ritter I love,’ she half shrieked ; ‘ Rudolf I hate.’

“ And again she was silent, though her face still spoke the unhallowed feelings of her heart.

“ Whose voice was it that had thus tempted her ? Not Ritter’s, but the worker of all iniquity, the enemy of all goodness and virtue, whose delight is the sin and wickedness of man, and who knows so well how to suit his temptations to the weakness of our nature.

“ ‘Six days,’ she thought ; ‘six days, and then the revels :’ and a voice within her said—‘In six days, Brunhilda, you shall be Ritter’s wife ; let that thought inspire you with firmness and courage.’

“On the morning preceding the revels, Brunhilda was most amiable to her husband, which made him almost forget the suspicions he had hitherto unwillingly entertained of her love and truth. He looked on her beautiful face—false index of her dark and repulsive heart. He loved her intensely, blindly ; and trust and love should ever be synonymous.

“ ‘My Brunhilda’s beauty will outshine all others to-morrow,’ he said, playing with her dark, massive ringlets ; ‘and our retinue shall be the most splendid among the nobles assembled at Eberberg.’

“ ‘No, no,’ said Brunhilda, hastily. ‘I like not such a pompous train of retainers—it oppresses me, Rudolf, and it is only ostentation and folly ; and, besides, we are to remain there during the night, and they would be cumbersome to our host and his retainers.’

“ ‘All night !’ said Rudolf, starting, ‘and wherefore ? I never consented to such a plan.’

“ ‘Indeed !’ said Brunhilda, sarcastically ; ‘and may I ask what objection the knight of Hohenstein can feel to being the honoured guest of the Baron

Von Eberberg ? If my husband is displeased with so rational an arrangement, there is yet time to send to the Baron, that we decline his hospitality.'

"Rudolf hesitated : he knew the implacable nature of his neighbour when he took offence at any real or supposed slight ; but far more than the wrath or vengeance of Ritter did he dread the sarcastic and bitter words of his wife, whose beauty still exercised so powerful a spell on his heart.

" 'No, Brunhilda, it is too late. It vexes me to do so, but we will remain the night at the Castle.'

"Even in those cruel and lawless feudal times when might was undisputed by right, and the bold Barons scorned to be accountable to law or justice, there was yet a vast difference between the characters of the nobles. Rudolf was one of the best specimens of the class, while Ritter was undoubtedly to be ranked among the most unscrupulous and lawless of the period, and as such hated and feared, even by those of his own rank and neighbourhood.

"At last, the first day of the year arrived, and was singularly fine for the season of deep winter. The sun put forth his bright, cold rays, and the frost and rains were far less severe than usual, at that period of the year, which naturally brought more spectators than customary to the 'Revels.'

"The Pavilion where these famed rites were

celebrated was situated about two miles to the west of the Castle. It had been erected at considerable cost by the old baron of Eberberg. The exterior was painted in colours with representations of every animal connected with the chase, and on the summit waved and fluttered, in the bright morning sun, at least some fifty banners bearing the names and badges of the various Knights and Barons, who intended to combat in the Wolves' Tournay, as it might well be termed.

“The approach to this pavilion was through a magnificent avenue, whose tall, stately poplar trees were brilliantly decorated with pure, white snow, and icicles. As Rudolf and Brunhilda traversed this avenue, shouts of ‘Long live the Knight of Hohenstein,’ rose from the crowds of the poorer people who were winding their way to the pavilion. As the fair Brunhilda and her husband approached, Ritter came eagerly forth to bid them welcome, an honour reserved especially for his most favoured guests.

“Many hundreds of Barons and Knights and their ladies, had already taken their places in the galleries. Ritter took Brunhilda’s hand, and led her to the seat of honour with knightly grace and courtesy, and while thus conducting her, whispered these words in her ear—

“‘All is arranged—no suspicion can possibly

rest on us ; he will die this day by the fangs of the wolf, not by human agency.'

"Before Brunhilda had time to answer, the trumpets sounded, and all eagerly looked for the commencement of the sports with breathless expectation.

"An exquisite little bag was presented to the fair queen of the day, containing fifty small ivory numbers, and then each knight approaching her fell on his knee, and took from the bag one of these small counters. Disappointed and crestfallen was he who did not draw that lucky number which would elect him as the first to commence the tourney, for each brave knight panted to display his skill and courage in the combat. At last it came to the turn of Rudolf, and with a bright smile and loving kiss of the trembling hand which held the bag, the noble knight proceeded to try his chance, and drew forth the fortunate number which secured him the pre-eminence in point of time, and as most thought, in skill also, for he was noted for his excellence in such sports.

"He retired at once to change his costume, for it was the custom of all who combatted with the wolves to doff their armour, and assume the garb of a swine-herd, with no other weapon than a short spear or javelin.

"As he was hurrying towards the arena, a heavy

hand was laid upon his arm, and looking hastily round, he saw a figure dressed in a monk's habit, and whose features were concealed under a hood, closely drawn over his face.

"He came closer still to the knight, and whispered in his ear with rapid but distinct utterance—

" 'Beware, Sir Rudolf, there is a deep and bloody plot to destroy your life this day. If you value your life, make some excuse to avoid the combat, and leave this place at once. If you persist in the combat, you will never leave the pavilion alive. The savage animal who will be your antagonist, after being kept a week without food, has just tasted sufficient to renew its strength, and make it a more deadly enemy. Think of your child, if not of your own life, and save yourself at once from this foul plot of your wife's and the infamous Baron Ritter.'

" 'Murdered — murdered,' groaned Rudolf, 'and by her plot ; oh, Brunhilda, and I loved thee so well ; no—no, it cannot be, you could not so cruelly scheme to take my life. Monk, it is some pretended fabrication—it cannot be true. What proof have you of your words ?'

" 'It is true, Rudolf Von Hohenstein, and you doubt me at your own life's peril. Ask not for proofs nor assurances, but fly—fly at once. Look, how anxious and terrified they seem at your delay.

NELLY MILES.

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breathless horror and astonishment, when the angry voice of the Baron Ritter broke on the silence.

“ ‘ Who dares thus interrupt the revels ?’ he said. ‘ He shall dearly rue his insolence.’

“ ‘ One,’ said the monk, in a deep and sepulchral voice, ‘ who not only knows the secrets of your dark and guilty heart, Baron Von Eberberg, but who gives an account of his actions to no one on earth. Question me not at your own peril.’

“ Something in the voice, or it might be the superstitious reverence in which the sacred persons of the monks were held at that age, prevented Ritter from making the fierce reply, which his flashing eyes and frowning brow threatened. All eyes were fixed on the monk as he quietly returned to his seat ; but the next moment their attention was drawn to the arena, from which the apparently lifeless body of Rudolf had been by this time removed by the attendants ; and the second contest was already commencing.

“ While the excitement of the next combat was at its height, Ritter quietly stole away unperceived. He hurried to his own private apartments, where two men in handsome suits of light mail armour were apparently expecting him.

“ ‘ Right, you are true to your time, my trusty and valued followers,’ he said, extending a hand to each.

“ ‘Surely,’ was the reply, ‘whenever the Baron Von Eberberg has any secret mission—any private service which he needs true and brave men to execute—he knows well that Buffo and Herman are ever ready and willing to do his bidding and keep his counsel. Is it not so, Sir Ritter?’

“ ‘I know it, I know it,’ said the Baron. ‘It is well, and you shall never repent your zeal in my service.’

“He gazed on the apparently lifeless form of the victim, which lay on a couch in the apartment into which he had now entered, the eyes were glazed, and the dress saturated with blood. If there were breath in that pale rigid form, it was so faint and flickering that each respiration might well be the last.

“ ‘Take him,’ he said, pointing to the body, ‘to the Castle, and put him in the north turret, alive or dead. To-night he will rest softly in the dungeon,’ said he with a mocking laugh; ‘but lay no violent hands on him—let there be no trace of aught on his person that could reveal secrets. He will die a natural death ere many hours.’

“ ‘Think no more of the affair, noble Ritter,’ was the reply. ‘Return to your guests as usual, and leave all to us; we will see that all is as you would desire.’

“The next moment Ritter was again by the side

of the beautiful Brunhilda, who looked troubled and anxious. Her eyes were fixed and restless, and the lips which had looked an hour before like a rosebud, were now compressed and colourless.

“ ‘Where is he!—my husband!’ she said, perhaps by way of exhibiting some decorous anxiety.

“ ‘Think not of him, he is well cared for,’ said Ritter aloud. ‘We cannot spare our queen till the sports are over.’

“ ‘Think, my heart’s love,’ he said in a lower tone, ‘that ere another month you will be the bride of him who loves, who adores you. Forget the past, and look forward, as I do, with rapture to the future.’

“ Brunhilda cast down her eyes, then raised them for a moment to the face of her guilty lover.

“ ‘I am yours, Ritter!’ she murmured, ‘You alone have ever possessed my heart, and I have risked all for you.’

“ Buffa and Herman were captains of a band of forest outlaws, but they did not restrict themselves to these sylvan haunts, but were willing to take any service that seemed profitable to their unscrupulous patrons. Ritter was one of their most valued friends, he gave them more employment than any noble in the country, and was liberal in his remuneration for their services. The two leaders were very superior in birth and breeding



to the rest of the band; indeed, Buffo was a descendant of the Falckensteins, and both had seen better days in their youth.

“ ‘I do not half like this business,’ said Buffo to his companion. ‘Here we are to murder in cold blood, for it is nothing less, a brave and true knight, to give that villanous hound more license to his passion, and greater scope for his ill-used power. Suppose, Herman, we change our minds and our road, and carry Sir Rudolf to his own castle of Hohenstein.’

“ ‘That, methinks, were to bring certain destruction on our own heads,’ said his companion. ‘Out on you for a soft hearted fool; would you offend our best patron and paymaster, and bring death and ruin on the whole band?’

“ ‘Well, I like it not, Herman. It is a foul, cowardly deed, that broods no good, and I would fain do as I said.’

“ They lifted the senseless Rudolf, and were soon on their way to the castle of Eberberg.

“ The sun, which had been hitherto shining brightly, was now overcast, the clouds were low, and the sky looked thick and murky.

“ ‘Listen, Herman, what is that,’ exclaimed Buffo, suddenly stopping.

“ It was a soft yet manly voice, singing in rich

tones a well known sylvan song, accompanied by the chords of a minstrel's harp.

" ' That pleases me,' said the man, ' it reminds me of other days in my father's hall, when I was young and innocent. Let us see who it is.'

" Laying down the litter in the road they approached a large oak tree, from which the sounds came, and where the minstrel was seated. He looked old and worn—his long cloak was in tatters, and his grey head and beard floated drearily in the cold wind. He did not appear to heed the two men's presence, but went on with his song, which was marvellous for one seemingly so aged and feeble.

" ' Why, old man,' said Buffo, ' how comes it you are not at the revels to-day ? Methinks the Baron and his guests would have given liberal guerdon for music like thine.'

" ' Look on me, and you will see the cause,' said the old man. ' I am nearly blind, and far too feeble to wend my way to the castle alone. Alas, alas, I have no one to guide my steps, and it is hard to be wandering alone and helpless at my age. I would my pilgrimage had ceased. It is a hard and weary life, with no friend to cheer one save this,' striking the chord of his harp as he spoke.

" ' Who guided your steps then in former times, old man ?'



“ ‘An only child,’ replied the harper, his voice trembling, ‘now buried in the cold grave.’

“ ‘You are right, perhaps, not to mingle in such a crowd as is assembled at the revels to-day,’ said Buffo, with a touch of kindness. ‘It would have been fatal to one so feeble, methinks.’

“ ‘Come, friend Buffo,’ said Herman, ‘you’ve often boasted of your wonderful musical craft. We’ll put it to the test. Old man, will you lend your harp to my comrade, for a brief space?’

“ ‘Surely I will,’ replied the harper; handing Buffo the instrument.

“ ‘My fingers are stiff by long disuse, Herman,’ said Buffo; ‘however, I will do my best, and if you doubt my ability—as that abominable smile of yours would indicate—I will soon convince you, that I could once handle it at pleasure.’

“ Even the hardened villain opened his eyes with astonishment at the outburst of rich melody which now poured forth from the rude lips of the rough and bold Buffo, who forgot his companions, his present position, his crimes and misfortunes as he fingered once more the familiar strings, and recalled the melodies of other days. Once more his mother—his fair young sister were at his side, smiling and praising his performances, as they had been wont to do, in his youth.

" Alas, that dream of happier and innocent days was brief and transient.

" Neither of the forest companions had noted the absence of the minstrel, in their busy and pre-occupied thoughts. He had hurried off to the side of the litter, and after gazing eagerly at the lifeless form for a moment, he took a small phial from beneath his cloak, and poured its contents down the parched lips of the sufferer.

" Rudolf moved, gasped for breath, and at last began to respire more freely. The old man watched his returning consciousness with joyful interest, and in a few moments Sir Rudolf opened his eyes, and gazed in bewilderment on the harper. The lips moved, as if struggling to speak, but the minstrel bent cautiously over him, and checked the effort.

" ' Hush,' he said, ' speak not a word, but listen. I am the monk, whose warning you heeded not, a short space since. You would have died but for the cordial I have just administered ; now you are saved ; my plans have succeeded so far. Now, much depends on yourself. Take this ointment, and when alone, apply it to your lacerated shoulder ; it will heal it quickly.'

" ' I cannot,' he said, feebly, ' my strength is gone ; I feel dying ; I care not for life.'

" ' Not so—you will not die,' said the monk ;

‘in a few hours you will regain much strength. Fear nothing—I will be near you. I have sworn to save your life, and you shall yet live to revenge yourself on your treacherous enemies. Farewell for the present. I must not be seen near you, or I shall be suspected.’ He hastened back to the tree, as his absence had been perceived.

“ ‘Thank you, friend Buffo,’ said Herman; ‘I shall not doubt your skill in music again. I never heard the like performance before.’

“ Buffo did not reply—he seemed still absorbed in a dream, and the sudden return of the harper, who relieved his half unconscious hand of the instrument he held, first recalled him to himself.

“ ‘Here,’ he said, throwing a few coins to the old man, ‘here, minstrel, is a slight guerdon for the loan of your harp.’

“ ‘Thanks, noble sir,’ said the old man, frankly, ‘I shall not forget your skill, nor your goodness.’

“ The two men went away, and so soon as their backs were turned, the harper threw the coins disdainfully after them, and then for a moment stood in deep thought.

“ ‘If,’ muttered he, ‘I could but get these scoundrels on my side, all would be easy enough. I like the look and voice of the young one—he deserves a better fate; and the other, perhaps,

might be induced to fall into his companion's views.'

"He caught up his harp and hurried after them. But, alas! he was too late. Just as he emerged from the forest he saw them entering the Castle. Still he quickened his pace, for he thought there might be a chance of getting permission to enter the Castle from the warders. Again he was doomed to disappointment.

" 'It is more than our lives are worth to allow you to pass,' said one, milder than the rest, 'wait, if you will, till the Baron returns, you may then gain access; but our orders are positive in his absence.

"The old man seated himself in the snow, and waited patiently the return of the festal train from the Pavilion.

"The shades of evening were already closing, and a few feathery flakes of snow had begun to fall, just sufficient to refresh the pale melting veil which had before covered the earth. Presently the sky began to clear, and the pale moon shone out more clearly—but still no signs of the cavalcade. There was a plaintive stillness in the departing day, that was only interrupted by the baying of the hounds at the Castle. The minstrel gazed on the moon, rising higher and higher in the vaulted sky—tears came into the old man's eyes, and his lips trembled with a sad and heartfelt emotion.

" 'Time has not changed the old familiar place,'

he said, sadly ; ' but sure am I that there is a curse upon it.'

" ' It will be dark,' he murmured, after a pause, ' ere they return, and I may not be seen.'

" Scarcely had the words been uttered when the sound of horses' hoofs, and shouts of laughter were heard, and barons, and knights rode on palfreys white as the snow, and a long train of retainers and attendants came in sight.

" First appeared Ritter's richly equipped body-guard, he himself with Brunhilda's followed. All memory of her murdered husband, or shadow of decency appeared to have vanished from the guilty and unscrupulous mind of the beautiful accomplice of the baron's crime. She was not only cheerful and gay, but lavished alluring smiles and words on her lover, as they rode along.

" The baron and the lady reined in their horses, as the sweet sounds of the harp broke on the night air.

" ' Do not waste such sweet sounds on the frosty, insensible air,' said Ritter, gaily. ' Follow us to the castle, where you shall enchant noble ladies with your lays of love, and brave knights with your songs of chivalry. But follow quickly, or you will be crushed by the cavalcade.'

" ' Patience, Ritter,' said the Lady Brunhilda, kindly, ' see you not the old man is blind ?'

“ ‘He shall be taken care of then,’ said the baron, and calling to one of his followers, he bade him take care of the old man, and see that he was well attended to. ‘But mind,’ he said, ‘harper, to be in readiness when you are called.’

“The old man answered by a low obeisance.

“His guide conducted him to a part of the castle occupied by the menials, and as they entered they stumbled against Buffo and Herman, whose faces were hidden by a black mask.

“ ‘Who are you?’ said the harper’s companion.

“They gave the password and disappeared; and again the minstrel was disappointed in his anxious desire to speak to them.

“As the evening wore on, the man to whose charge he had been confided, made his appearance, requesting him to follow to the great hall, as the baron had called for him. They traversed intricate passages, with here and there a lamp suspended from the damp vaulted roof, that only served to give light to small space, leaving most of the surrounding apartments in darkness.

“ ‘Come, come,’ said his companion, gruffly, seeing that the harper lagged behind, ‘the baron will not thank me for lingering. Give me your harp, and you’ll get on quicker.’

“Arrived at the end of one of these dark passages, the minstrel purposely separated himself

from his guide, and throwing off his feebleness and apparent age, bounded swiftly up a narrow flight of steps, and entered a dark turret.

“ ‘Rudolf,’ he cried, breathless with eagerness, ‘where are you?’

“No answer came, and the minstrel groped about on hands and knees in the darkness.

“ ‘Oh, joy,’ he exclaimed, as his hand fell on the object of his search, ‘it is as I expected; they have left him here for dead.

“He felt for the cold lips of the sufferer, and administered another of the cordial draughts, then listened in breathless suspense. A low, deep groan was the first sign of life.

“ ‘Rouse yourself Rudolf; courage—I am here—your friend; all will be well.’

“ ‘Holy virgin, is it you, my kind preserver; but it is too late, you have come to see me die.’

“ ‘I have come to save your life. The draught I gave you this afternoon, was to lull you into a species of stupor, and deceive your captors, and it has answered even better than I had hoped. Listen; those who brought you here believe you dead, otherwise you would have been cast into the dungeon; but most likely they will return anon, and if they find you still alive, you will be conveyed thither. To escape this danger, drink another of

the potions, so soon as I am gone. Only obey my instructions, and you shall be saved.'

" 'I beseech you, tell me who you are,' said Rudolf, 'who have risked so much for me, and art so conversant with this doomed castle?'

"The minstrel bent over him, and whispered a name in his ear, which made the knight start, even in his state of weakness and suffering.

" 'Holy mother—can it be—ha, then—'

"But ere he finished the sentence, he heard the door gently close, and a moment or two after, could distinguish the gruff voice of the minstrel's guide cursing and threatening him for the delay.

" 'I am here, good fellow,' said the harper, meekly, 'remember I am old and blind, and pardon me, I mistook my way.'

" 'I have a mind to knock your stupid pate from your worthless carcase,' returned the guide, roughly dragging him after him, to the hall.

"As they entered the vast apartment, Ritter's flashing eyes and darkened brow were bent over them.

" 'What means this delay in obeying my summons,' he said. "Look you, harper, but for this lady's intercession, I would have you strung up to the highest battlement in the castle. But, begin at once, or it shall be your fate even now.'

"The harper bent over his harp, to conceal the

angry, proud flush of indignation that rushed to his cheek. However, he obeyed the rude behest, and even the haughty baron's anger died away, as he listened to the enchanting strains which poured forth from voice and harp, and filled the vast hall with their rich melody. Many were the compliments he received from knights and dames, and more than one poured liberal largesse into the bag he carried. But, his eyes wandered round the hall in vain for the Lady Brunhilda.

“ ‘She is absenting herself,’ he thought, ‘to deceive these people, thinking they will give her credit for attending and weeping over her unhappy husband.’ ”

“ Ritter did not seem to pay much attention to his guests. He appeared uneasy and absent, and more than once, cast suspicious looks on the harper, the tones of whose voice appeared to recall some unpleasant memories.

“ ‘Fool that I am,’ he thought; ‘this is the second time to-day I have been terrified by a voice.

“ He went to a table, and taking a wine cup in his hand, drank long and deep, then his eyes wandered nervously to a small door, leading to an adjoining apartment. The harper watched closely his every movement, and presently a retainer approached him, and after whispering in his ears they left the hall together. It was so late when he

again returned to the apartment, that many of the guests had already taken their departure, and ere long the hall was quite empty.

The strains of the harp ceased, all was quiet within the hall, while in the courtyard all was bustle and uproar. The old man had hidden himself behind his harp, in a remote and dimly lighted corner of the hall, and by peering cautiously through the strings, he could see everything that passed. As he thus sat, watching—the small door, on which Ritter's eyes had been fixed opened and the lady Brunhilda appeared.

“ ‘Are you quite alone, Ritter?’ she said.

“ ‘Yes, quite, my own Brunhilda,’ he said, folding her in his arms; ‘and now there is nothing on earth to prevent my heart's love being Baroness of Eberberg.’

“ ‘You say so, Ritter?’

“ ‘Yes, dearest, there is no obstacle now to our happiness.’

“ ‘Were there many enquiries after him?’

“ ‘Yes, the old Baron Von Trenenstein did not appear fully satisfied with my answers to his enquiries. I told him you were watching by your husband's side, but that life was ebbing fast. To this he did not reply, but gave me a look I could perfectly understand. He is a powerful noble, and I would not willingly excite his suspicions. I

have therefore given my directions to two good good and useful friends of mine, who will be rich enough after to-night to retire from public life, if they wish it ; my bounty to them just now, was large enough to show my gratitude and my love for you, my Brunhilda, for they brought me the joyful news that you, my long loved one, are a widow.'

"At that moment, the harp fell with a heavy crash, making the guilty pair quail and tremble with conscious guilt.

" 'Calm yourself, dearest Brunhilda. It is only the minstrel's harp, he has evidently fallen asleep; varlet,' he added, giving the old man a kick, 'seek some other place to slumber in—you will scarce save your head, if you are not more discreet."

"The minstrel, rubbing his eyes, tottered from the room, but no sooner had the door closed behind him, than he threw his harp on one side, and bounding along the passages with the speed of a stag, rushed up the stairs to the turret where Rudolf had been placed.

"He was still there, but in a trance so profound, as might well have deceived the gaolers, for even to the harper's eye he was to all appearance dead. The minstrel lingered but a short time, and then left the castle by a secret postern ; he hurried to

the forest, knocked at a cottage door, which was immediately opened by a swineherd, whose ears Ritter had once wantonly cut off.

“‘My horse, quick,’ he said. ‘Which is the nearest Castle, Hohenstein, or Trenenstein?’

“‘The latter,’ said the swineherd.

“‘Then let us away thither at once, every instant is precious.’

“By dawn the following morning, more than double the number of Ritter’s retainers stood without the Castle of Eberberg. Their young and handsome leader might easily have surprised the castle by entering at the secret postern gate, but he preferred an open attack.

“‘I wish, my young friend,’ said the old Baron Trenenstein, ‘that we had brought our archers with us, our great assault must be on the portcullis, and I hope our battering rams will do their work effectually.’

“The sky became a little lighter, but still the sun hesitated whether to bless the earth that day with his smiles; and while thus hesitating the clouds began to empty themselves of their heavy burden of snow. Indeed, the storm was so sudden, and the fall so dense and close, in small flakes, that the besiegers could hardly see each other, but though disagreeable enough, it rather aided, than baffled their projects.

“They surprised the warders—possessed them—

selves with ease of the postern and outer towers, killing or taking prisoners all who resisted the attack.

"The drawbridge was next attacked and taken, and all this with such activity and silence, that it was not till the first heavy stroke of the battering rams fell on the portcullis that Ritter was aware that his castle was besieged.

"The cry of alarm and 'treachery' flew from mouth to mouth, and tower to tower. The alarm bell was rung, and all was confusion and hurry within the castle. Still the battering rams kept thundering their irresistible hammers at the strong gate, which soon began to betray some signs of weakness. Another and another tremendous stroke, and then it fell with an awful crash in the court-yard.

"Ritter and a large body of his retainers strove to impede their operations by showering arrows and missiles on the besiegers from the battlements; but to little purpose, for the thick snow-storm prevented them from taking any aim at the assailants. Ritter had believed that the massive gate would resist till the last the attack of the besiegers — but when he saw it totter, he rushed down at the head of his followers, to defend the entrance, with their lives.

"But as they rushed to the gate, a cry met

their ears, which arrested their progress, and well nigh transfixed Ritter to the spot.

“‘Otfried, Otfried!’ rang through the castle—
‘down with the murderers.’ ‘Long live the
rightful heir of Eberberg.’

“One solitary man came forward before the rest, who lingered, hesitatingly behind. His head was covered with snow, and his aspect wore the expression of a savage beast rather than that of a human being. Onward he came—apparently seeing no one, but in truth his eyes rivetted on one object. And then, quick as lightning, he cast a javelin at his brother Otfried, who fell in his heavy armour, to the earth. The next moment Ritter was pinned to the ground by a dozen lances, which pierced him in as many vital parts. And thus was closed the guilty and violent career of the usurping Baron Ritter.

“Otfried was quickly relieved of his heavy armour, and it was happily discovered that he had sustained but little injury, having fallen from the sudden violence of the blow, not from the effect of any serious wound. His name, mingled with the awful uproar without, struck terror to the inmost soul of the guilt-stricken Brunhilda, as she sat trembling and wringing her hands in abject fear and humiliation, but not penitence. To poor Rudolf, on the contrary, it sounded as the herald of

life, and safety, and happiness, joyful as a peal of marriage bells, filling his heart with the joy of the bridegroom, as it whispers in his ears—'To-day is the beginning of a new life.'

"Otfried looking round him, beckoned to the retainers and menials to approach. They had hitherto kept at a distance, partly, perhaps, from astonishment, partly from a vague fear of their returned lord; but as they now drew near, the long absent baron's eyes fell on many a well-remembered face he had known and loved in his youth.

"'Be my faithful and true followers from this day,' he said; 'let the past be buried in oblivion. I see many old retainers of our house shedding tears, but whether for joy, or grief for my dead brother, I know not.'

"'Believe me,' answered an old vassal, 'that it is joy, noble Otfried—joy, such as has not filled our hearts for many a long year, which moved us thus. We were persuaded you had died in Palestine, or I doubt whether there were many here who would have submitted to the rule of the Baron Ritter.'

"'I believe you, my faithful Brunn,' said Otfried; 'and may you all prove true and obedient vassals, as I will be to you a kind and loyal lord.'

"Otfried then hurried to the north tower, where he found Rudolf, though weak, still sensible. He at once had him placed in a comfortable apartment,

and after himself again tending his wound, he summoned a leech in his train, and placed the patient under his charge. He at once hurried to the grand hall, where on the previous evening, disguised as a harper, he had met his brother and his guests. He then slowly passed through the door by which he had seen Brunhilda issue forth, but the apartment to which it led was empty. He entered an inner room, and for a moment stood in speechless horror at the wretched object who met his gaze. Seated on the ground in a distant corner of the room crouched Brunhilda—but how changed from a few short hours before ! What strange power had been at work, to avenge the injured Rudolf and destroy those fatal charms, which had held the heart of the guilty Ritter in such powerful chains ? The splendid eyes were wild, and fixed on vacancy, her magnificent hair looked actually withered as it hung around her, and the fair, dazzling skin was sallow and livid with terror. In her hand she held a small dagger, which she grasped tightly, as Otfried approached.

“ ‘Where is he ?’ she said ; ‘have you killed him ? Speak, Otfried, say that he is wounded, but not dead—not dead,’ she shrieked in agony.

“ ‘Peace, lady,’ said Otfried, calmly but peremptorily, and approaching fearlessly to the maniac. ‘Give me that dagger—you will not ?

then I must take it, for it is no weapon for woman's hands.'

"And with a mingled force of mental and bodily strength, which cowed the enraged, but terrified woman, he took the weapon from her hand, and cast it from the window.

" 'Now,' he said, 'I will answer you, since you are powerless to harm yourself or others. Listen, and, if you can, learn to repent your wickedness ere too late. You asked the fate of my guilty brother just now. He is in the adjoining apartment, a corpse.'

" 'You dare tell me that !' she screamed ; 'dead—my Ritter dead !' and, casting herself at the feet of Otfried, she cried wildly, 'Kill me, in mercy kill me—I cannot, will not survive him. What is there to live for ? Oh, I am punished—fearfully punished, for my great wickedness. I cannot live without him ! Oh, tell me he is not dead—say that there is hope—even one shade of hope, and I will bless you !'

" 'None, unhappy woman : he is dead.'

" 'And you,' she said, her mood suddenly changing, 'you are his murderer—a fratricide.'

" 'No, lady, I have not his guilty soul's blood on my hands. I am innocent of even involuntarily causing his death, though he would have taken my life again and again.'



“Brunhilda groaned, and cast herself once more on the ground in agony.

“‘Calm yourself, lady, I beseech you : your husband is near—I will take you to him.’

“‘Scoffer, mocker of my misery, begone,’ she screamed. ‘I have no husband ; he who once bore that name I murdered—barbarously murdered, and the husband of my heart’s love is dead—dead ! my sin and its punishment is greater than I can bear. I shall go mad ! Would that I could forget in madness all the past—that I could hide my wretched head from all mankind. But there is no spot on earth where Rudolf will not haunt me, nor in that other dismal world of spirits.’

“‘No, lady, Rudolf’s spirit will not haunt you. Thanks to my care, he lives to pardon you. I, whom you deem your enemy, have saved his life, and you from the fearful sin you meditated. He lives, and will recover ere long from his wounds.’

“‘Had an angel spoken and said, ‘Brunhilda, your sins are forgiven,’ the wretched woman could not have felt more joy.

“‘Poor heart, poor heart,’ she murmured, pressing her hand on her side. ‘Art thou indeed delivered from perpetual darkness, and permitted to hope for a little twilight ? Baron Otfried,’ she said, more calmly, ‘I will retire from the world, for Rudolf I have never loved (would God that I could

have done so); and what misery I have brought upon him.'

" 'Oh, lady, what a spring-time of joy might your whole life have been, could you have loved that noble husband. But the greater sin is on those who forced you to wed him, knowing that you loved another. But come, lady, will you see Sir Rudolf?'

" 'Never! never!' she exclaimed. 'I could not look on him whom I have so cruelly injured; I should die beneath his glance. Go to him, I entreat you, kind and noble Otfried, and tell him that a wretched mother entreats kindly at his hands the privilege of bidding her child a last adieu, before the immovable barrier of the convent gates close on her for ever. Tell him,' she added, sobbing bitterly, 'to send me his blessing and forgiveness; I know I am unworthy of it, but he is noble and generous, and will have compassion on the stricken penitent.'

" 'Farewell, then, lady for the present,' said Otfried; 'I will tell the knight at once.' And returning to his friend, he repeated to him the scene we have just described. Rudolf listened attentively, and then hiding his face in his hands, groaned aloud.

" 'Tell her,' he said, 'that I forgive her, as I hope for God's mercy myself. Bid her return to

Hohenstein to see our child, and take from it what she may desire; and till she quits it I will remain your guest.'

"Rudolf afterwards founded the beautiful convent of St. Bertha, of which Brunhilda was abbess. She was, however, always called Mother Teresa.

"When the convent was finished, he permitted their child to visit her mother annually for a week; and eventually, after Brunhilda's death, the orphan heiress of Hohenstein took the veil, and became second abbess of the convent.

"Rudolf died early of a broken heart, and his magnificent castle became a ruin.

"Otfried lived for many years to lament the loss of his dear friend, and died at last in a good old age, respected and beloved by equals and inferiors. At his own request he was buried in the little churchyard at Eberberg; and they planted at the foot of the grave a yew tree, and cut it reverently in the form of that cross which he had trusted in during life and in his death.'

"There, Harry," said the old gentleman, "my story is finished, and a pretty long one, too. I did not think I had so good a memory for such legends in my old age."

"A thousand thanks, dear sir. I never heard a more charming legend, melancholy though it is."

Some discussion followed as to the characters

and events of the tale, and thus concluded another, and as Harry invariably reflected, the last free and unrestrained evening they would enjoy, for on the following day Linda Steinen was expected, and the young man looked forward with very ungracious and ungallant reluctance to her arrival.

“Of course,” he thought, as he set off before breakfast on the following morning for the churchyard of Eberberg, to discover the grave of the good baron Otfried; “she will expect me to be always with her, and take her wherever she wants to go, and then my grandfather, and even my father seems to think it will be so charming for me, and that we are to be such friends. I wish my grandfather could see Nelly. She would just please him, I know, and he would see what a charming English girl is, and not fancy Linda so perfect as he appears to do.”

Poor Harry! he did not confess to himself his secret jealousy for his beloved Nelly, and his fears less there might be some danger that this same tiresome cousin should eclipse the village beauty in his father’s estimation; we will not even hint that she could do so in his own.

However, he took his solitary stroll, and thought of the memorable day, when in another and lovelier churchyard, he had plighted his faith to his Nelly, and received her troth in return. He determined

ere many days were over to risk sending her a letter, though it had been tacitly agreed that they had better not attempt any regular correspondence during his absence.

He lingered longer than was perhaps necessary, and returned somewhat late for breakfast, but as his early strolls were pretty well understood by the seniors, he felt no uneasiness on that score.

He entered the room through a deep bay window, and finding them all assembled at breakfast, was about to commence an eager account of his visit to Otfried's grave, when he was suddenly arrested by the sight of a new visitor presiding familiarly over the coffee urn, and talking merrily with Mr. Lindheim, who sat beside her.

Harry needed no introduction to tell him that this was his cousin Linda, and he looked eagerly at her, to endeavour to form some idea of the character and disposition of the young girl who was about to be brought into such close contact with him. The glance he took was certainly not an unsatisfactory one.

Linda Steinen was a brunette, unlike most of her German countrywomen ; but she probably inherited that complexion from her Austrian father ; as well as the dark rich hair and brown eyes. But the laughing expression, and frank clear glance, were more like Mr. Lindheim's, or rather what

Harry could have fancied he must have been in his younger and happier days.

Altogether she was a very winning, attractive creature, and at first glance her English cousin began to think it might not be so irksome to be attentive to her after all.

Mr. Lindheim, who looked happier than Harry had yet seen him, at once called his grandson forward.

"Here, Harry, my boy, come and shake hands with your cousin Linda; you must be good friends, my children, for your mothers were as loving sisters as I ever saw, and you are as like them as it is possible to be."

Harry was a gentleman, and a frank true hearted young man to boot, and he instantly and gracefully advanced to the blushing girl, and took her half stretched out hand.

"I am very glad to know you, cousin Linda," he said, "and I hope you will be as anxious to obey our grandfather as I am."

"Capital, my boy; he'll do, won't he, Charles? though they pretend you Englishmen cannot say a kind thing gracefully. There, sit down, my dear Harry, and get some breakfast."

Harry took the chair indicated on the other side of Linda, and accepted the cup of coffee she poured out for him, and commenced an attack on the game

pie before his plate, but somehow he had not so good an appetite as usual, and Mr. Lindheim, with a sly glance at Mr. Maxwell, feared "that he must have walked too far, or been mourning over lady Brunhilda's fate."

"Perhaps my cousin has some other fair lady to occupy his thoughts," said Linda archly. "I have heard the English girls are very pretty, are they not, cousin Harry?"

"I am a sad ignoramus in such things," replied Harry, trying to laugh off his confusion; "you know, or rather my grandfather knows, I have seen very little of my own country, away from Dellcombe."

"You must describe that same Dellcombe to me," said the girl; "I must be interested to hear all about my dear aunt Agnes' home."

Harry thanked her by a look—but fearing that his father would be overcome by any further discussion on such a subject—he began to ask Linda about her journey, and that led to questions about riding, walking, and all kinds of youthful sports and exercises, and before long the young people were as friendly, and as much at ease with each other, as their seniors could have wished.

"Harry," said Mr. Lindheim, "you and Linda had better take a ride this afternoon; she knows all the places about here, and will show you plenty

of interesting spots. So you had better begin at once ; no time like the present."

And the ride was taken, and Linda proved a capital horsewoman, and very tolerable guide to the spot chosen for that day's excursion. In the evening she sang some of the pretty simple German ballads, such as

" Herz mein herz warum so traurig.

And Harry thought that certainly the old castle saloon looked more cheerful, and the evening passed far more quickly than usual, now that a pretty merry girl like his cousin enlivened their party. Mr. Lindheim laughed more than once at the young folks' jests and repartees, and even Mr. Maxwell gave a grave kindly smile at his wife's young niece. Was Nelly in danger of being forgotten now that her young lover is exposed to a greater test of his affection than he had yet known ? Time will show.

CHAPTER XII.

WE must return to John Miles, whom we left on board the "Ocean," bound for Gibraltar. It was soon after the memorable and desperate attempt of the Spaniards to retake that important and nearly impregnable rock, which was so gallantly repulsed by the British, that an English squadron, of which "The Ocean" formed a part, anchored in the Bay.

No sooner had the squadron cast anchor, than the Admiral signalled for Captain George to go on board his ship. Admiral Rich was an old friend of the Captain's, and as the "Ocean" had only joined his squadron a few hours before, and had not yet reported its observation while cruising, the summons was a natural and ordinary one.

John Miles was one of the men chosen to row the Captain's gig as he went on board, and he could not help casting a wistful glance as his commander passed him.

"Well, Miles, is your letter ready? there will be a bag made up for England to-morrow," said the

Captain, interpreting the anxious look of the new seaman, who had already become a favourite with his officers.

"Thank you, sir. It is quite ready, sir," was John's reply.

"Very well ; give it to Lieutenant Morris when you return on board. What part is it for?"

"Yorkshire, sir,—Dellcombe."

Again the peculiar look came on the captain's face, and he repeated involuntarily—

"Ha,—Dellcombe,—I remember."

John thought this repeated interest in his native place, as well as the captain's condescension, somewhat singular. But he knew from the old hands that their commander was invariably kind and feeling to the crew, so far as discipline would permit, and put down the occurrence to that cause.

When the captain had reported the few observations of his short cruise to the admiral, he went on to speak of the terrible explosion they had witnessed at Monte Christo.

"A remarkable occurrence, certainly," observed the admiral thoughtfully. "And you say you made out several sail, Captain George."

"Yes, Admiral ; but only one neared the Island."

"And you do not think there was much loss of life ? One could scarcely wish one's worst enemies such a fate. I would prefer meeting the French

in fair fighting to seeing them destroyed in such a manner."

"I think they must have escaped pretty well, Admiral. The sail we first perceived certainly sheered off during the storm, and even the ship that neared the island was seen at some little distance by our men. I only wish that squall had not come, or we should have given a good account of them, I doubt not."

"Better luck next time, Captain," said the Admiral, smiling. "You'll have plenty of work before the war is over I expect; I am looking for orders every day."

"So much the better, Admiral, it's sleepy work just now."

After a little more conversation, and a hospitable lunch, the captain returned on board his own ship, and John Miles did not fail to place his letter in the hands of Lieutenant Morris, according to the captain's orders, and pleased himself in his watch that night with thoughts of the joy it would carry to the hearts of his sorrowing wife and children, though his absence from them might be so sadly and indefinitely prolonged—if, indeed, his life was preserved to return to old England and his beloved Dellcombe once more, amidst all the dangers of storms and of warfare which threatened his present career.

On the following morning permission was given by the captain to several of the crew to go on shore, and a party was told off for that purpose, the remainder of them having the promise of the like privilege on the following day.

John Miles was among the first detachment, but on going on shore, he strolled away from his companions, who, he knew, would go at once to some inn to indulge in a regular drinking bout, while he longed for a quiet walk by the shores where he could think of home, and recal old days to his mind as he passed slowly and leisurely along. Besides, he wished to see something of this wonderful place of which he had read much in books and newspapers. He wandered along admiring its precipitous rocks, its bold, rugged slopes, till he came to a dark subterranean passage, which he entered, intending to explore it for a brief distance and return. But he went on till he came to a long gallery extending some quarter of a mile, from which he emerged into another passage. Just as the light streamed in through the opening a fearful object met his eyes; he started, recoiled, and falling from the railed gallery on which he stood struck his head against the wall of the passage and lay unconscious on the ground; perhaps never to be discovered till too late for help.

When the muster-roll was called on the crew's

return on board, John Miles was, of course, missing, and enquiries were made as to the cause of his absence. No one could tell what had become of him, no one had seen him from the first landing on the rock.

Some looked suspiciously at each other, and one or two of the officers whispered together.

"You were to blame, not to see that your men were all complete, Morris," said the captain. "A boat must be put off at once, and the island searched till Miles is found. If he has stayed on shore without cause, he will be severely punished."

A boat was put off, with the first midshipman, Joe Smith, and two other men. They dispersed in different directions, but for a long time their search was unsuccessful. For hours they explored the rock in every possible spot, enquiries were made from every person likely to have seen him, and at the houses of refreshment, where he might be supposed to have lingered; but to no purpose. The captain's orders had been so peremptory, that they durst not return without the missing Miles, till every possible chance of finding him had been exhausted, and they at last, assembled and began to wander in company along the wild rocks, as a last resource.

"It's no earthly good," observed the middy. "The fellow's deserted, that's clear."

"Beg pardon, Mr. Young, but I don't think it; Miles was too honest a fellow to sneak like that, though he didn't come on board over willingly."

At that moment, a sound was heard, which caught Joe's quick ears.

"Hark! there's something moving down there. I'll go first, Mr. Young; I'm less good in the world than you, sir."

And the brave old fellow began at once to descend a steep flight of steps, in the direction of the sound.

Joe Smith was as plucky and tough an old salt as ever sailed in a man-of-war, but for once his courage was put to the test, for the object he now encountered appeared to him not of this world.

Within some five paces of him, sat a hideous monster, with a face resembling a human being, around which clustered a thick mass of long grey hair. He grinned diabolically at the party who were advancing to disturb his solitude, but made no attempt to move.

"Ha, ha," said Joe; "I'll have you, man or devil, in a twinkling, if you don't make way for His Majesty's officers."

He loosened his belt, to get the cutlass which he had with him, but the monster did not wait for its appearance, but bounded away from rock to rock; and then both the Middy and his com-

panions perceived that it was an ape of most unusual size, worthy of being classed with the newly discovered gorilla of M. du Chaillu. The occurrence was a fortunate one, for within a few feet of the stone where the creature had been sitting, they found the insensible form of their missing comrade, and guessed at once the cause of his accident.

John Miles had never seen anything like the enormous specimen of the monkey tribe which met his eyes on emerging from the gallery, his utmost experience in such matters having been a small monkey in some travelling caravan. The surprise and momentary terror was so great, that he had stumbled, and fallen as we described, hitting his head so severely, as to stun him for the time.

The men hastened to carry the injured man to the boat, but though he soon recovered his senses, he was evidently severely hurt by the fall; and it was with some difficulty that he was hoisted on deck, when he was at once placed under the surgeon's hands. It was found that his leg had been broken and his shoulder dislocated in the fall, but though the injuries were severe, they were more tedious than dangerous, and as the crew was now inactive until further orders, the absence of one of the hands was of little moment. Joe Smith paid him frequent visits in his leisure hours, and even

Captain George looked in on him more than once. On his second visit to the sick man, he gladdened his heart, by informing him that he thought he should be able to give him promotion ere long.

The boatswain of one of the ships in the squadron had died suddenly, and Captain George's boatswain had expressed a great desire to serve under the commander of that ship, who had once been lieutenant in the same vessel with him.

"I shall therefore appoint you in his place, at any rate for the present," said the Captain; "you are steady, diligent, and well educated for your station, and deserve the promotion."

"You are very kind to me, sir, I could not have hoped for such goodness when I was torn from my home. God bless and reward you, sir."

"Well, Miles, I have certainly taken an interest in you, on other accounts than your own good conduct; but I am happy to give encouragement to any of my men who deserve it."

John recalled the peculiar look of his captain, when he had spoken of Dellcombe, and could not help connecting it with his present remark, but of course he did not venture to make any observations on his commander's words.

"If I might be so bold, sir," he said as the Captain turned away, "I hope there will not be

jealousy in the crew, on account of my good fortune, sir."

"If there is, they will not dare to show it, Miles. My men know that any causeless discontent is as severely punished as real grievances are promptly redressed."

And without another word, he left the cabin.

Five weeks had passed. John was going on pretty favourably, but still unable to put a foot to the ground. The days seemed long and tedious to him, and only enlivened by the frequent visits of his friend Joe, who remained true and staunch to him through his weary sickness and confinement. There was a strange, rough tenderness at times about the rugged old seaman; a touch of hidden sympathy with Miles's occasional fits of home sickness and anxiety about his beloved ones, which made John think that there must have been some passages in his life more tender and domestic than the habits of a man-of-war could furnish. He often wondered what had been the old man's early story, and on one occasion when they were likely to be undisturbed for some time, and Joe appeared to be in rather a communicative, amiable mood, he abruptly asked him to tell him his history, before he became a seaman.

"Pooh, messmate; it's too long a yarn; and I'm not over fond of thinking over it, myself."

"But I should like uncommonly to hear it, Joe. You have been very kind to me, and it does one good sometimes to ease one's heart to a friend."

"And make a clean breast of it, eh, messmate? Well, I don't care; but I'm a soft-hearted fool, even now, when I think of old times. However, here goes—but it's a long yarn—and a black one, in some places, I can tell you."

John settled himself to listen; Joe took a whiff of "baccy" and began—

"I was born at Fairvale, on the north coast of Devonshire. My father died when I was quite young. I had an uncle, my father's brother, who lived in the village, and he took my mother and I to live with him, for he was a widower, his wife had died in her confinement with a little girl, about a year younger than I was. Little Fanny (for that was her name) and I were brought up together. For some years we were at liberty to do almost as we liked—that is to say, we were not sent to school, nor restricted in what we did. We used to sit on the beach for hours, watching the waves dashing in and going out, sometimes rushing after them, and running back when they pursued us, as the tide rolled in. How delighted we used to be when the wind was high, to watch the ships struggling with the waves, and the men doing all they

could to keep them clear of the rocks, which were dangerous enough just there.

"Years flew by, and they were the happiest I ever knew, for we were young and merry, and knew no care or trouble. But as I got older, and began to take more notice, I thought it very odd that my uncle always disappeared towards night, and whenever I asked my mother where he was gone, I was sharply told to ask no questions, or sent off at once to bed. Still I wondered on, and noticed that as soon as he left the house, my mother became uneasy ; and if he did not make his appearance next morning, we knew very well he would not return till night, and that my mother would be anxious and gloomy all day. Besides, in those cases we were never allowed to go out, and our door was kept strictly bolted. This mystery at last so excited my curiosity, that I was determined, if possible, to find it out, though I did not tell even Fanny of my intention.

"It had been blowing very hard on one of these days, when my uncle was absent, and I watched my mother's anxious face as she stealthily looked out of window, as usual, at dusk, when we were sent to bed. That night I was determined to keep awake. I did all I could to keep my eyes open, and succeeded with some difficulty. It must have been about midnight when I heard my mother un-

bolt the door, and my uncle's voice enquiring if any one had been there for him that day.

" 'No one,' was the answer.

" 'That's strange,' said he.

" 'Who did you expect, Bob ?'

" 'Never mind, Mary : as they have not been, you needn't trouble your head about it.'

" From this conversation I could gain no clue to the mystery. I determined to watch my uncle. Time passed on, but no opportunity came. Listening was useless, so I made up my mind, when I was sent to bed, to watch my uncle going out, and then manage to descend from my bedroom window and follow him.

" I was sure my mother would not come into my room, so I was safe on that score. One dark night, therefore, as soon as my uncle left the house, I jumped out of bed, dressed, and opened my window, from which I soon managed to get to the ground, and stole after him.

" I took good care to keep at a sufficient distance, so as not to be discovered. The night was black as ink ; I could not see my hand before my eyes, and I took off my shoes, fearing my uncle might hear my footsteps behind him.

" He was now making for the cliff, which he mounted with some difficulty. I followed close at his heels : we walked, I should think, at least two



miles, when we came to a few small cottages, in which lights were moving about. My uncle gave a low whistle; at the next moment a man sprang out—from whence I could not tell, but he nearly touched me as I stood, and passed rapidly to where my uncle was standing. I heard him say to the man, ‘We had better make our way to the beach—we are late to-night, but I could not come sooner.’

“They now descended a rugged cliff. The night was still, and the only sound heard was the surge making a doleful noise against the detached pieces of rock, as I quietly but quickly followed my uncle and his companion. I was light and active, and could keep up with them without difficulty.

“The place we were now in, looked as if the rocks had been cleft asunder by some freak of nature, for between us and the other cliff I saw a large circle, forming a small bay, which they crossed. I followed with a beating heart, for I thought that here I could not escape being either heard or seen, as this circle was covered with light looking shells, making the spot appear bright, although it was now pitch dark.

“My feet were terribly cut by these shells, but I cared little for that, so that I gained my object. My uncle and his companions continued their way a short distance under the cliff, when they stopped

suddenly and listened, and I soon heard the dull splash of muffled oars. I knew the tide was out, and I crept further down the beach, and hid myself under a large piece of rock, and watched everything that was going on.

“I now saw several men leave their boats, and at some distance I thought I could distinguish larger vessels. The men were carrying heavy loads on their backs.

“Presently there was a light struck. Lanterns were used, and with great difficulty a large piece of rock was rolled away from the cliff, exposing to view a deep cave.

“To my great astonishment the light showed me my uncle, dressed as a waggoner, and so wonderfully disguised that even I could not have recognised him, if I had not heard his voice. I could just perceive that this cave was filled with every description of merchandize; but, of course, I dared not go very near to examine it.

“I now heard the noise of wheels, and soon distinguished two horses dragging an immense waggon, which they at once began to load. I watched them attentively: the waggon was soon loaded, heavily enough, but to my great astonishment they covered it with shells and beach, or anything they could find on shore, so as to make it appear a load of shingle.

"My uncle then took his whip, and, bidding his companions 'good night,' disappeared. I waited some time until the men had dispersed, when I returned home, weary and footsore, but happy in having gained my object without being detected.

"A few years after this discovery, on one eventful evening (ah! I remember that evening as if it had been yesterday), a fearful gale of wind was blowing from the north-east, and there was a terrific ground swell. We were, as usual, sent to bed early, although by that time I was nearly fourteen years of age. As I said before, it was an awful gale. I did not even attempt to get into bed, for sleep was out of the question.

"I stood for nearly an hour at my little window, watching the sun going down. The sea looked like a vast fire: then darkness came on. Now and then the moon showed herself, but only for a moment. Darker and darker it grew, the wind roared louder than any guns I ever heard. I could not remain any longer alone, so I left my room and went down stairs, and asked my mother to let me stay with her, to which she readily consented, for she herself was sadly alarmed at the frightful gale.

"I enquired where my uncle was. She replied that he had gone down to the beach, as a ship in distress had been seen, and it was feared she would be wrecked, as she was close upon the 'Black Reef.'

“ ‘And if she touches it,’ said my mother, ‘God help the poor souls on board.’

“I asked no leave from her, but rushed out of the house, and flew to the beach, where I found nearly all the village congregated, in spite of the gale.

“The sea was rolling mountains high ; rocket after rocket was sent up from the ship, as signals of distress. We could now catch a glimpse of her, but she was without sail or mast, both having been carried away. We could hear her creaking planks, as she laboured against that tremendous sea.

“ ‘Ah !’ said one of the men, ‘it’s all over ; she’ll be a wreck in a few moments.’

“ ‘What can be done for her ?’ asked my uncle : ‘our boats will never live in such a sea.’

“ ‘Look ! look ! there, she’s on the reef !’ was the cry ; and then we could hear the despairing shouts of the crew, imploring help.

“ ‘Follow me !’ cried my uncle ; ‘we may yet save their lives.’

“ ‘Several men, and my boy self among the number, scrambled after him with the greatest difficulty and danger over the ‘Black Reef,’ on which the vessel had struck. The reef itself was connected with the main land, but when we got there we had yet more difficulty in keeping our footing, for it was as slippery as ice itself.

"We could now perceive the crew lowering their boats. The men on shore called out to them not to attempt to get into them, as such a proceeding would be certain death. Many ropes were thrown out to them, and our brave fellows risked their own lives in the hazardous service as coolly as Englishmen ever do in such cases. Within half an hour every soul on board was saved, but the vessel apparently was a hopeless wreck.

"The captain told my uncle, who had been foremost in the attempt to save the crew, that the unfortunate ship was a merchantman bound for Plymouth, with a valuable cargo from India, and he offered four hundred pounds reward if she or the cargo could be saved.

" 'And it would be well worth that money,' said my uncle, 'even if it can be attempted at all; for it would be a desperate business—would it not, neighbours?'

" 'It's worth double the money,' cried many voices.

" 'Five hundred then shall be the reward if you succeed,' said the unfortunate captain.

" 'Nothing can be done in such a sea as this,' said my uncle, and he invited the captain to go with him till morning, when there might be some hopes of doing something. The following day at dawn every small craft near the shore was manned,

and my uncle, heading the little fleet in his own boat, allowed me to accompany him. The greatest difficulty was in finding the exact spot where the unfortunate vessel went down. We were sure it could not be far from the 'Black Reef,' and of course made direct for that spot.

" 'There she is,' exclaimed the men in chorus; for at a glance we could see her bowsprit just above the water.

" My uncle, who took the lead in this undertaking, said that he thought it would be the best plan for some to get on the reef and others to keep near the wrecked vessel, and attach all the tackling to it possible.

" 'Jump out, Joe,' he exclaimed; 'but take care, it's very slippery.'

" I landed safely; he followed, and I held out my hand to him, for I thought he staggered as he stepped from the boat. It was too late, however, his foot slipped, and he fell backwards into the water, but in an instant he was pulled out by his comrades without being much hurt. We then worked hard for four days and nights without intermission, and on the fifth our efforts were crowned with success. The liberal reward given by the captain fully satisfied the men for their labours, and soon afterwards he succeeded in

making arrangements to get this valuable cargo shipped off to its destination.

"Before he left Fairvale, however, he had taken a fancy to me, and indeed I had worked to the very utmost of my boyish ability for him. So just when he was going to leave us he made my mother an offer to take me, saying that 'I should make a good active seaman.'

"My mother gratefully thanked him, but declined the offer, saying that I was too young to leave home. But my uncle exclaimed at her refusal, that it was woman's folly to stand in the way, when I might be made a man of, and that he was sure it would be a capital thing for me. He asked the Captain what kind of a ship his next would be, and whence bound. The Captain replied that it would be of course a merchantman, and he hoped less unlucky than the last.

" 'You see,' said my uncle, turning to my mother, 'the lad will often be able to come and pay us a visit, and I say again it would be a sin to prevent his having such a start in the world as this.'

"So, after some hesitation and many tears, my mother consented, for she did not like to oppose or offend a relative who had protected us for so many years.

"My greatest grief was the parting with my dear little cousin, the companion of my childhood.



“ ‘Do not go away, Joe ; what shall I do without you?’ said poor little Fanny, sobbing ; ‘pray, pray let him stay with us, dear father, don’t send him away.’

“ ‘Pooh, pooh, child, dry your eyes, and don’t be such a little goose,’ said my uncle, in his rough kind voice. ‘He must go, and get made a man of, and then when he’s a little bit older, and you grow to a woman, he’ll come back and see his sweetheart, eh, Joe ? You always called Fan your little wife ; didn’t you ?’

“ ‘Yes, and she shall be my wife in earnest,’ I said, proudly—drawing up my head to look as tall as I could. ‘Don’t cry, Fanny, I will go and get plenty of money like Captain Brown, and come back and marry you, and then we can all live together, can’t we, mother ?’

“ ‘Don’t talk such nonsense, Joe ; I wonder at you, Bill, putting such rubbish into children’s heads.’

“ But I was in good earnest, and so also was Fanny, though we were such a boy and girl—so we went together to our old places, where we had so often played, and then I began to talk quite gravely to my cousin about the future.

“ ‘Fanny,’ I said, ‘you must promise never to marry any one but me. I may be away a long time, and it will be some years, you know, before

we are old enough to be married, but I shall never forget you, or like any one else, and you must promise me the same, won't you, dear ?'

" ' Yes, Joe, indeed I will,' she sobbed. ' I never could like any one but you, and every day I shall think of you, and come and look at the sea, and the ships, and pray for you, that you may come back safe. Oh, Joe, I shall be so unhappy till I see you again.'

" I did all I could to console her, and, at last, the smile came back, and she said, she would try and comfort my mother, and take care of her, till I came back again.

" At last, the bustle of getting me ready was over, and the moment came, when I must say good-bye to my darling Fanny and my dear mother, who had always been a good parent to me, as far as she knew how. It was a terrible struggle, and I was almost choked, because I did not think it manly to let the tears come, but it was soon over. I kissed little Fanny again and again, and my mother also; and bidding my uncle good-bye, I started for Plymouth with Captain Brown.

" I found afterwards that Captain Brown was a loser by the wreck of his ship, having had a large share in her, and the insurance scarcely covering her loss. I was sorry for this, for he was a worthy

man, and very kind to me, as long as I was under his command.

“It was not many weeks before we started for India, as the captain was soon appointed to another vessel, and I spent this time with an old aunt of my mother’s, who received me most kindly, and seemed quite overcome with her feelings on first seeing me.

“‘It’s many years, boy, since I saw your mother,’ she said, ‘though she used to be like my own child, and I’ve often thought she’d forgotten her old aunt. I should like to see her again before I die.’

“I assured the old lady that my mother often talked about her, but that she could not write, and, till now, was kept at home by us children; but I promised, when I came back from my voyage, I would try and persuade her to pay her a visit, as I should be quite a man then, and should have some money of my own to give her.

“‘Do, my boy,’ said the old lady; ‘but I may be in my grave before then. However, you’re a brave boy, that’s certain, and I don’t doubt you’ll do well.’

“It was a lovely afternoon, when we first lost sight of old England, and though I did not forget my mother and Fanny, I was soon engrossed in the new scenes and duties I was thrown into; and,

on the whole, I liked my profession. Our voyage was a safe and prosperous one, and we reached India in as short a time as was well possible. But, after we got there, we began to trade between India, and China, and New Zealand, and it was some three years, before I saw my own country again. How glad I was to see the familiar old rocks, and to leap on shore, when I had obtained my fortnight's leave of absence from my kind captain, to visit my home.

“ I found my aunt still living, and promised her once more to try and bring my mother with me on my return. I left Plymouth in the evening, and by walking all night, arrived at Fairvale the following morning. How my heart beat as I approached the dear old cottage ; every stone and tree brought back some memory, and as I opened the little garden gate, I could hardly breathe for mingled fear and joy. I caught sight of a young woman in the porch of the cottage, but so grown and so altered, I could scarcely believe it could be my little Fanny. I approached, she looked round as she heard my steps, and the first glance was enough. It was the same dear face, as sweet tempered and cheerful as ever, though from a pretty child she had grown to a fine young woman in my absence. She sprang to me with a cry of joy, and I had her in my arms, and was kissing her, only

as the true hearted tar does the girl of his heart, when my mother and uncle came out to see what was the matter. They were not much altered—at their age people don't change much—and as for Fanny and I, we did not quarrel at all with each other for being older and taller than before. I begged and prayed my uncle to let us be married while I was at home, but he would not listen to it. He said I was too young, and Fanny too. If I came back in the same mind from another voyage, he'd have no objection then, but not now.

“I was not much more fortunate with my mother; she said she could not leave such a young girl as Fanny among such rough neighbours, but she bade me promise my aunt, that when I came back next time, and Fanny and I were married, we would all go together and see her. And so, after a very happy fortnight—the last really happy one I ever knew, I started again with a light heart; for though I had not got my way about my Fanny, I knew now she was true to me. My uncle had given his word we should be married when I came back, which I thought would be in about eighteen months. Again I sailed with my good patron, who, as far as he could, showed me all the kindness he had promised, and would now and then ask me some questions, that showed he had not forgotten Fairvale, and the wreck of his ship, ‘Janita.’

“ Well, comrade, it’s no use making a moan over what can’t be helped. I went my second voyage, and came back again all safe and sound, found my old aunt alive and merry, and I set off for my home as gay as a lark. Again I lifted the latch of the garden, and looked eagerly for the figure of my Fanny, thinking she would be on the look out for me, as she had had a letter to tell her about the time we were likely to get to England—at least I had sent her one some weeks before. Somehow my heart misgave me, though I had been so joyous as I came up to the gate. I fancied the place did not look as it used to do; the garden was neglected and full of weeds, the windows were not so bright as usual, and the door was shut, instead of standing open, as it generally did.

“ I knocked at the door—I had not courage to go in, as I should have done generally. No answer came, and I slowly lifted the latch and went in. Not a creature was in the little parlour, and it looked to me lonesome and desolate.

“ ‘ Fanny, Fanny,’ I said aloud, in agony ; ‘ where are you ?’

“ ‘ Joe, my son, my poor dear boy ! is that you ?’ said a feeble voice, and my mother appeared. She was dressed in deep mourning, and her face told me that some calamity had happened. She threw herself on my neck, sobbing violently. ‘ My

dear boy, my poor, poor son,' she said in broken accents.

" 'Fanny,' I gasped; 'where is she?'

" My mother led me to a seat, and then with many tears, and as gently as she could, she broke the news to me.

" 'My son, can you bear sad news?'

" 'Yes, mother, only tell me the worst.'

" 'Our Fanny is an angel in heaven,' she said; 'she thought of you to the last, Joe, and bade me tell you she loved you dearly.'

" For a long time I was too completely upset to hear a word more, but when I was a little bit calmer, my mother told me all about our poor girl's illness and death. A fever had broken out in the village, and Fanny, who had been one of the first to go and nurse those that were sick, soon took it herself, and died. I won't say no more about her, comrade; it makes a fool of me even now."

And Joe blew his nose violently, and cleared his throat, as if the "baccy" had gone terribly the wrong way. John Miles gave him a hearty shake of the hand.

" 'I'm main sorry for you, Joe. I can tell what it is to be away from my Mary, though I hope I may live to see her again. But what did you do afterwards?'

" Well, I stayed a bit at Fairvale, but I could

not bear the old place now Fanny was gone ; and my uncle was not like the same man, and my poor mother quite broken like. So at last I persuaded her to go back to Plymouth with me, and stay a while with my aunt, as I had promised she should when I came back this time. I went for the last time to the churchyard, to look at my Fanny's grave ; and a heavy heart I had when I turned away, and thought I should perhaps never see even the place where her dear corpse lay again ; for I'd a sort of feeling I should not come again to Fairvale ; and already a plan had come in my head, which did not make it very likely I should soon be at home again after I had once set off. I bade my poor uncle a sorrowful good-bye.

“ ‘ Hark ye, lad,’ he said ; ‘ I’ve got no one now but your mother and you, and what bit I’ve scraped together will be enough to keep your mother as long as she is likely to want it. So you need not be anxious about her, when you’re on the salt water in a squall, and all hands piped—eh, Joe ?’

“ And the poor old man tried to give one of his old jolly smiles, but it wouldn’t do, and he fairly broke down, and so did I.

“ Well, messmate, to make my yarn short, I took my old mother to Plymouth, and when I had seen her comfortable with my aunt, I told her that my mind was made up to go into the King’s service

as my old captain would not go out again, and I thought I would like to have a change altogether. She did not like it, because she knew it was very unlikely she would ever see me again ; but she saw I was terribly cut up for poor Fanny's death, and did not say much against it. So I got a berth on board a ship, and from that day to this I've been in His Majesty's service, God bless him !”

“ And your mother ?” asked John.

“ She lived for some years. My uncle kept his word, and left her a comfortable maintenance for her life. So she went to my aunt at Plymouth, till she too, was taken from me. But I have never seen the old cottage again, though I have often thought I'd like my last days to be passed there, and my last resting place by the side of her I loved so dearly, and shall never forget. But I'm rather afraid, John, my long home will be in the deep ; for ever since my mother's death, the sea has been my chief dwelling-place, and I've no one to care whether I live or die.”

John Miles was sensibly affected by this story, so different to what he could have expected from a rugged old blue jacket like Joe. And the thought of his own dear wife gave him a fellow feeling for his comrade, which almost brought tears in his eyes.

“ I must not be downcast, nor make you in the blues, messmate,” said Joe, more cheerfully. “ I

hope I have never injured any one here below, and some day I trust I shall meet my little Fanny and my dear old mother up aloft."

"Well, Joe," said John, "one thing you must promise me, that as soon as this war is over, if we both live to return to England, you will come home with me; for any one who has been kind to me, my darling wife and children (God grant I may see them again) will receive with open arms, and think nothing too much to give them a hearty and grateful welcome. You'll promise, won't you, Joe?"

"Aye, aye, messmate, please God," said Joe, rising to obey the bells, which summoned him to his watch.

We shall see hereafter whether the two friends so oddly brought together were spared to realize these hopeful anticipations.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was not long after the scene related, in our last chapter, that the admiral ascertained from a reconnoitering sloop, which he had despatched for that purpose, that the ships seen by Captain George, near the Isle of Monte Christo, were no other than Napoleon's small fleet on its way to Egypt, and that the ship which had neared the Island was the celebrated fast frigate, "Dijon." Her intentions had doubtless been to have taken in a cargo of ammunition, and then to have joined the fleet, but Heaven had willed it otherwise, and it was believed she had perished in the storm which had destroyed the stores she came to fetch.

The "Ocean" and the rest of the English squadron had now been some little time off Alexandria, and an engagement was shortly expected.

They had been on the look out for the enemy for several days. Many false reports had been current concerning them, and it was from being

misled by one of these rumours that Nelson missed the honour of entertaining Napoleon on board an English vessel, an opportunity as much desired on one side as dreaded on the other.

The French fleet arrived off the coast of Egypt, not many miles from Alexandria, only a few hours after the English squadron had sailed from Alexandria in Syria, where they understood they should meet the foe. It was a most extraordinary escape for the French troops. Napoleon was so anxious to land his soldiers and get on shore himself, that he determined to disembark at Manabon, though he knew the danger he was incurring. Admiral Bruges begged him to consider the sacrifice of life that must ensue, by landing on such a dangerous coast. Napoleon said he would rather perish with his troops in the sea, than run the risk of being taken by the English, which would be the case, he felt certain, if the disembarkation was delayed.

Napoleon himself was the first man to make for the shore. The wind was very high, and darkness covered the angry roaring surge. The disembarkation now commenced in good earnest, with more than the risk and danger prophesied by the Admiral. It was a terrific scene; boat after boat was dashed against the rocks, and many a brave fellow found his grave in the waves, instead of in



the field of glory. But Napoleon landed his army ; his object was accomplished, and it was not his wont to regard a sacrifice of life when he had anything to gain by it.

It was not long after the "Orient" and several other ships of war had landed the troops they were transporting, that the English fleet made its appearance, and a battle ensued. The French admiral and his captains knew perfectly before its commencement that their fate was sealed. They understood full well the inferiority of their ships in number and strength ; however, they did all they could to save the fleet. They fought like brave men, and perished gloriously in the vain struggle ; but the battle is too well known to all for me to risk wearying my readers by a description. I cannot, however, avoid touching on the deplorable disaster that occurred to the French in this action, namely, the destruction of their noble vessel "Orient" and its crew by fire.

In this ship perished Admiral Bruges and Captain Casa Bianca, whose heroic son was kneeling by his wounded father when the ship blew up. A sailor had offered him the means of saving himself, but the noble youth refused to leave his father, and they perished together.

The main fleet returned to England, leaving small squadrons to sail in different directions.

The "Ocean" and one or two other vessels were ordered to cruise sometimes off Cadiz and sometimes in the Bay of Biscay, and a pleasant and jolly time the tars had of it. Few ships of any kind had been seen since the battle, and the English squadrons had the seas pretty nearly to themselves.

The "Ocean" was one of the small flotilla that had been for several days watching the movements of the Spaniards. The weather had been for some time, and still was, tempestuous; heavy rains had fallen, followed by sea fogs. So dense had it become that the ships entirely lost sight of each other, and the very sound of the voice was deadened and almost lost in the heavy atmosphere. For two days and nights this dense vapour covered the sea. Then followed an awful storm. The sailors were nearly blinded by the vivid flashes of lightning, and the rolling thunder was as loud and deafening as the cannon in a battle. The winds howled and shrieked like the shrill cries of a thousand wild birds seeking for their prey. The ships mounted high on the foaming billows, and then were plunged suddenly into the abyss beneath, whilst the bravest of the tars confessed that they had seldom witnessed a more terrific tempest.

"Oh, thou cruel and fearful water,
Stay—oh stay, thy mighty hand:

Cease, oh cease, thy angry roaring,
Have pity on that helpless band !”

The storm raged for hours in unabated fury, and then a tremendous crash was heard. The masts had been struck by the lightning, and Captain George’s voice was heard, even among the roar of the tempest, commanding the men to their duty.

“Down with it !—cut the rigging ; throw every gun overboard.”

These orders were promptly executed. In a few moments the heavy masts fell with a crashing noise, and the naked ship entirely at the mercy of the hurricane, was drifting helplessly on with the waves, towards Cape Finisterre. The boats were lowered ; the storm for a moment appeared to abate in fury, the heavy sea fog dispersed in some degree, and they caught a glimpse of the watery looking moon looming through the black clouds. But the gleam of hope thus afforded was terribly transient. The storm was renewed ere long with even increased fury, and at last the unmanageable vessel was violently dashed against a rock, and soon began to fill fast with water.

“To the pumps, every man that can be spared !” was the prompt command.

The men obeyed, and worked as men only can work whose lives are at stake. But it soon became terribly apparent that their efforts were use-

less. It was impossible for pumps to stem the rush of water through the immense hole made in the bottom, and they perceived that the ship was half full of water, and already beginning to sink.

"It is in vain," said Captain George, who had hitherto displayed the most undaunted coolness and consummate skill in handling his noble ship.

"To your boats, there is not a moment to be lost ; it is our only chance."

The command was promptly obeyed ; boat after boat was loaded, and pushed off from the ship, though it was more than doubtful whether they could live in such a sea. Nearly all the crew and officers had left the vessel—the captain, Lieutenant Kerr, and about half a dozen men, including Joe Smith and John Miles, remained on deck. The latter was about to follow his comrades, when he perceived Captain George had left them, and was entering his cabin. John rushed towards him.

"Save yourself, sir," he said ; "we have not one instant to lose."

"No, no, my good fellow," he replied ; "think only of yourselves. I will not leave my ship ; I shall perish with her. Save yourself, Miles, and hark ! Should you be so fortunate as to survive, and return to Dellcombe, say to Miss—"

But a terrific lurch stopped the words, and John, seeing that there was not a moment to be lost,

seized his commander, and dragged him forcibly towards the boat. Joe Smith, who was the last man besides themselves on deck, assisted him to lift the struggling officer into the boat, which had no sooner put off, than the vessel sank in the deep abyss, never to be seen more. Captain George hid his face in his hands, and groaned deeply as the ship disappeared.

"Why did I not perish with her?" he murmured; "she was like wife and child to me."

The whole energy and attention of the men were required for the preservation of the boat from the violence of the tempest, which continued to rage for hours after they left the ship.

"Our graves will be in the ocean before many hours are over," observed Joe Smith, in a low voice.

"God help us," said John Miles.

"Amen," said the captain, fervently. "There is no hope but in His mercy. The boat cannot live in such a sea."

He had scarcely uttered these words when the little bark was lifted high, as if by some invisible hand, and the crew dashed violently on a rock.

Lieutenant Kerr was nearly lost, as the waves receded; but Joe Smith's powerful arm caught him in his strong grasp; and brought him to land, though at the risk of his own life. They were

now comparatively in safety, though their position was still extremely perilous. They climbed to the summit of the slimy reef, expecting every moment to be carried away by the furious waves. During the night they had to cling to the rock as they could, for the gale did not abate till dawn.

At last the welcome streaks of daylight appeared, the wind dropped, and they saw the sun serenely rising as it were, from that ocean, but recently so nearly their grave. With one common impulse they fell on their knees and offered up thanksgiving to the Almighty Being, who had saved them in the hour of peril.

The storm had ceased, and the dark fog was dispersed, so that they could take a survey of their situation. The fugitives looked around the isolated reef, on which they had been cast, and were astonished they had not been swept from it by the violence of the tempest. Not a ship, nor any other object was to be seen, nor any trace of the other boats containing the unfortunate crew of the Ocean. As the day wore on, and these fresh emotions subsided, they became sensible of the pangs of extreme hunger and thirst.

"Better have been drowned than be starved to death on this rock," said one of the men.

"No, no," observed John—"rather let us thank God for our merciful preservation, while the rest of

our comrades are most probably lost. While there is life, there is hope."

"Right, John," said Captain George, "and the God, who rescued us from a watery grave, can still save us from our present peril. Courage, my men, let us not despair—we have much to be thankful for. Let us hope, and trust, and bear our hardships like men."

The day was waning, and still no signs of rescue.

Another dreary night was succeeded by a bright calm sunrise, which almost seemed to mock their misery. To add to their troubles, the Captain, to whom they were all sincerely attached, began to show evident signs of illness. Probably, the extreme anxiety and agitation attendant on the loss of his vessel had weakened his frame, and made him more susceptible to the heat and privations they endured; at any rate, he was evidently seriously indisposed, in spite of his efforts to conceal it from his companions. His eyes looked wild and glittering, his brow and skin were burning, and at times he lay motionless and apparently unconscious, which fits were succeeded at intervals by excited and hurried words and movements yet more distressing.

As the second day wore on he was gradually sinking into a state of stupor, when he was suddenly roused by Joe's eager exclamation—

"A sail,—a sail,—we are saved."

The Captain raised himself languidly, Lieutenant Kerr, who had saved his glass on leaving the ship, soon made out that the craft in view was foreign, from her colours.

But friend or foe, anything was better than starvation on that desert rock, and they tied their jackets on the oars of the boat, and held them aloft, to the utmost of their power, hoping to attract the attention of the stranger. But for some time, she held on her course, apparently not seeing, or unheeding their signals of distress.

"She does not see us," said Lieutenant Kerr, "she is tacking the other way; God help us and our poor Captain."

And he looked sorrowfully at the prostrate form of their commander.

"She sees us! she sees us!" exclaimed John, joyfully; "see, she alters her course, and is bearing towards us." Lieutenant Kerr gave his glass to Smith; his own eyes were half blinded by anxiety, and long straining.

"Yes, she is tacking about, that's certain," said Joe, "we're saved so far; but, if I can see right, it is either a Frenchman or a Spaniard; either way, we are prisoners."

By this time the ship was nearing the Island, and hove to as near as possible to the rock on

which the unfortunate men were standing. Two boats were manned and came towards them; and even in that helpless condition the Englishmen could ill brook the manner in which they were seized and almost thrown into the boats, which instantly put off towards the ship.

They were thus taken as prisoners on board "The Tabello," which turned out to be a Spanish frigate of some eighty guns, cruising about in those waters, and commanded by a proud and merciless captain. No one on board spoke English, and our friends were equally ignorant of Spanish; little or no communication could therefore pass between them, and the new comers were at once thrust together into a small cabin, and placed under strict guard, without any distinction of rank.

Finding that no attempt was made to offer them food, the seamen made signs to their guards that they were dying of hunger. Perhaps the men were somewhat more compassionate than their officers, or else they feared to lose their prisoners, for some bread and a kind of wine was brought to them, which they eagerly devoured: and felt somewhat refreshed, save, indeed, the unhappy captain, who appeared fast becoming insensible to all around. His eyes glared wildly when spoken to, and he would break out at times into unnatural laughter or equally alarming fits of weeping.

Lieutenant Kerr who attempted to address one of the men in French, succeeded in making himself understood so far as to prevail on him to conduct him to the Captain, hoping to be able to obtain some assistance for his own commander in his rapidly increasing illness.

When they were gone, John Miles, who had hitherto stood somewhat apart from his two officers, drew near to Captain George, and succeeded in prevailing on him to swallow a few spoonfuls of the wine which was left; and then dipping his handkerchief in the water, he bathed his hot brow and hands.

The Captain appeared to be somewhat revived by this treatment, and, opening his eyes, looked more rationally at John than before, and even spoke his name in faint accents.

At this moment Joe Smith uttered a joyful cry. He had been attracted by sudden movements and cries on deck, and seizing the glass which Lieutenant Kerr had laid down on leaving the cabin, looked eagerly around.

"We are saved, we are saved," he shouted. "Cheer up, sir; cheer up. There is a squadron in sight, and I see the English colours."

Captain George seemed to understand him, but he only shook his head, and murmured, "Too late, too late."

"Oh, if they do but spy us out before night," cried Joe, continuing to gaze, "but these cunning dons will get out of their way pretty quick in the darkness if they can."

"Oh, sir, try to rouse yourself," exclaimed John, seeing the Captain relapsing into terror. "Think you are a British officer, and that you must be safe in any case. The Spaniards dare not trifle with you; even if we are not rescued, your life and rank will be respected."

Captain George shook his head.

"You see, Miles, how far we are respected," he said languidly. "They are barbarous and revengeful, these Spaniards; better have perished on the rock than in the dungeons of their fearful prisons."

"Do not speak thus, dear sir; trust in God," said John, kneeling by his side; "you will live to think differently, when we are in our own country again."

Faster and faster came the shades of night; Joe still gazed intently through the glass, and John, who soon joined him, could perceive that the expression of his face was becoming more grave and anxious.

"Do you still see them, Joe?"

"Hardly; it is getting too dark."

"Then I don't think there's much hope," said

John, in a low voice. "They will miss us altogether. If it were morning, instead of night, there might be some chance."

"Still, they may have sighted us, and overtake us in the morning."

There was a pause, during which Joe eagerly listened to the movements on deck.

"They are crowding sail, I'll swear," he said ; "the ship is under every rag of canvass they have, and is sailing rapidly to land. We shall be landed in a prison, yet, Miles, I'm afraid."

John had little to say in reply to this. His comrade's experience was of course far greater than his, and he could only return to his post by the Captain, and watch him with sad and silent anxiety.

Presently, as the night closed in, the invalid began to shiver with cold and approaching fever, and his teeth chattered violently. The men took off their jackets and covered him as well as they could, and, after a short time, the paroxysm appeared to pass off, and the captain sank into a heavy slumber ; then his breathing was troubled, and he started from time to time as if in pain. Sometimes he would open his eyes for a moment, and then the shiver would recommence, and he murmured, "Cold, cold ; oh, if I could but get warm."

The faithful seamen were in despair, and tears

were actually rolling down John's rough cheeks, when the door of the cabin opened, and Lieutenant Kerr, accompanied by a young officer, evidently high in rank in the ship, from his air and uniform, came towards the couch where the patient lay. Lieutenant Kerr took the covering from off the suffering captain, and turning to his companion, appeared to be pointing out his state and the rank he held, in French, to the young Spaniard. The men of course did not understand the dialogue that ensued, but they rightly guessed that the Lieutenant described, as movingly as he could, the circumstances of the wreck, and the state of the unfortunate commander. And from the measures which were afterwards promptly taken by the young Spaniard, it was plain that the English officer represented the dangerous illness of his Captain as threatening fatal consequences, unless he were at once removed to some more comfortable and suitable place, and his symptoms attended to. John Miles watched the face of the young man, and thought it looked kind and pitying. And the orders he proceeded to give were certainly evidences of the sympathy his countenance had expressed. After some little deliberation, the unfortunate Captain George was removed to one of the superior cabins, his wet clothes removed, and himself placed in bed. The ship did not carry a surgeon, but a

glass of warm spirits and water was prescribed by the young officer, as the best remedy for the ague-like shivering, and at any rate had the effect of making the patient more comfortable, and throwing him again into a sound sleep. Nor did the young man's kindness end here. He opened his own cabin to Lieutenant Kerr for the night, as he would be on watch, and Miles was installed as nurse to his commander, for the present.

"Good night, John, I hope to find Captain George better in the morning," said Lieutenant Kerr, as he left the cabin.

"I hope so, sir, I'll take good care of him," was the reply—but John's heart misgave him, and he ardently wished for his own gentle Mary to help him with her woman's skill in the care of the sufferer, whose state he feared was indeed serious. His presentiments were but too correct. Captain George awoke in the middle of the night, with a revival of the shivering fit, and yet burning heat of the temples and skin.

"More clothes, John—more clothes," he murmured. "I am dreadfully cold, and yet, my head burns. Oh, God preserve me, for I am very ill."

"You are feverish, sir, but I hope it is only a violent cold. Don't be downhearted, sir. We may be rescued before many hours, and then you'd soon be well."

John did all his simple skill dictated. He bathed the sufferer's brow, and placed clothes over his shivering form, and sat watching him, as he lay tossing to and fro in his narrow bed. But delirium now set in. Captain George talked incessantly of his ship, that she was the best and the fastest vessel in the Navy, and that he had never yet met with any disaster during his many years command of her. And then he muttered names and places, which excited John's curiosity—he spoke of Dellcombe, and murmured a name as familiar as his own to the seaman's ears. John listened attentively, but then the muttering ceased for a time, and he hoped the sufferer was again sleeping. He had taken the Captain's watch from the table to see the time, as the day was now dawning. Suddenly a sound was heard, which made him start, and the watch fell with a crash on the floor. He listened again, there was the same loud booming noise, was it thunder? no, the sky was clear, and the ocean calm. Again it sounded, and now there was no doubt, it was guns, ship's cannon—the English squadron was at hand, they were saved."

"Captain George, sir, Captain—Captain, we are rescued—the English are on us."

But it was no avail, the sufferer lay motionless, or opened his eyes on vacancy. John left the cabin

and rushed on deck. A fearful scene of confusion met his eyes. The sails and rigging had fired, and the English cannonading was tremendous, while even to John's inexperienced eyes, it was evident that the Spaniard would quickly be boarded, and compelled to strike. Still the "Dons" fought well and manfully—and it was plain they meant to sell their ship and lives dearly. John returned to the cabin, and found it tenanted by Lieutenant Kerr and Joe Smith, who had come hither unnoticed in the general confusion.

"We must move him as soon as it is possible," said Lieutenant Kerr. "There will be little time when the ship has struck to save ourselves, to say nothing of anyone else. Wrap him in the blankets, my men. I will give you notice when to bring him on deck."

It was nearly half an hour before the firing ceased, the Spaniard's colours hauled down, and the sword of the haughty commander delivered to the English captain. The crew of the "Tabello" were being hastily disarmed and transferred from the shattered vessel to the English frigate, when Lieutenant Kerr stepped up to Captain Douglas, the commander of the "Mersey," and reported to him the misfortunes which had led to their imprisonment and presence on board the "Tabello."

"I am heartily glad we came up in time,"

said Captain Douglas, "but where is Captain George."

"Laid up with a bad attack of fever, as I fear, sir; I will have him brought on deck, if you please, and carried on board your ship."

"Certainly—certainly—and we have a surgeon, a very clever fellow, who will set him on his legs again in a twinkling, if there is nothing worse the matter."

Lieutenant Kerr called his men, who at once appeared, bearing the form of the luckless commander of the "Ocean" carefully between them. A sort of litter was quickly made of mattresses and bedding, and the patient soon conveyed safely on board the "Mersey."

A general shout of congratulation rang through the air, when the English prisoners were recognized by their countrymen, and the seamen were eagerly welcomed on board, and treated with such rough comforts as a man-of-war can furnish. Soon after the whole of the crew and prisoners had been transferred from the "Tabello" to the "Mersey," a sheet of flame burst forth, the masts and rigging fell in one heavy mass upon the deck, and an awful explosion told that the ship's magazine had caught fire. Scarcely had the boats got clear, and the frigate at a safe distance, when the vessel blew up, and soon sank, a burning mass,

into the deep. It was a splendid but awful sight; and John Miles stood for some moments, almost forgetful of his beloved commander, who had been carried below, and was now under the surgeon's careful and even friendly examination. For strangely enough the surgeon of the "Mersey" turned out to be an old acquaintance of Captain George, and soon recognized him, in spite of some years' absence, and the ravages of illness.

Meanwhile Lieutenant Kerr was relating to Captain Douglas the kind interference of the young Spaniard on the sick officer's behalf.

"He shall not repent it," said Captain Douglas, "I will have it properly reported at head-quarters, and I doubt not, it will tell favourably in his own case. Meanwhile he shall have every kindness, while on board my ship."

"And the men who came with us, Captain; they would be happy to take service with you, if you can make room for them, till we can report ourselves at home."

"All right, but the first thing to be done is to see about poor George, I will go and see Reed, for I need not tell you that it's no joke to get fever on board a ship, when there are some hundreds of men under one's charge."

The Captain and Lieutenant Kerr descended to the cabin, where the sufferer had been laid, but no

sooner were they within hearing than his voice fell upon their ears, raving loudly, but indistinctly, of recent events. The storm, the shipwreck, the loss of his ship, were all evidently present with his mind, and he spoke touchingly of the men, whose fate was uncertain, and then reverted to his faithful companions in misfortune.

"Poor Miles—yes, he is a good fellow, but it is no use, we are in the Inquisition, and I can feel the flames—they burn—burn, like fire."

Mr. Reed turned sadly from the bedside, and came into the saloon to the two gentlemen.

"Bad case, Reed?"

"Serious enough, Captain; typhus, no doubt brought on by cold and the shock to the nerves. The attack is about as bad as it can be, but I hope we shall get him through; he is young and very healthy, and that's in his favour."

"It's a bad job on board, if it spreads there'll be the devil to pay, eh, Reed?"

"If you please, sir," said John Miles, who had been one of the invalid's bearers to the cabin, and who had lingered unperceived ever since. "I would like to be allowed to nurse him, sir, and the Captain spoke as if he'd like it himself just now."

Captain Douglas looked to his companions.

"I believe you cannot do a better thing, Cap-

tain," said Lieutenant Kerr; "I know he is a great favourite with Captain George."

"And it's necessary to have some one who will take good care of the patient," observed the surgeon; "much depends on the nursing in these cases."

"I'll do my best, sir," said John, "and my comrade Smith would help also, when I had to turn in for an hour or so, and it would save trouble, sir."

"I shall bargain for part of the duty," said the Lieutenant, smiling, "so we shall not have to task your goodness too severely, Captain Douglas."

And thus it was arranged, and the poor sufferer consigned to the care of his trusty though rough nurses.

Their care and the surgeon's skill seemed to avail little for many days, and it was at last decided that the little party of mariners should be landed at the "Rock," which they were now nearing.

"He'll be cooler and quieter on shore," said Mr. Reed, "and it's about his only chance."

Lieutenant Kerr, Miles, and Smith, expressed their determination to accompany their commander, but the other two men remained among the crew of the "Mersey." Accordingly, so soon as they arrived at Gibraltar, the invalid was conveyed care-

fully to the hospital, with his faithful attendants; but he was still unconscious of all that was passing, and perfectly unaware of what had happened since they were taken prisoners on board the "Tabello."

Days and weeks went on, and a dreary time it was for John Miles. The Captain's illness took a favourable turn about a week after they landed at the "Rock," but though the immediate and instant danger was over, his weakness was so extreme, and his brain so susceptible, that the physicians pronounced his recovery extremely doubtful. And there was our poor and devout farmer, among strangers, in a strange land, with little to divert his mind from dwelling on his own troubles, and yet more depressed by the danger and distressing state of his beloved commander. Lieutenant Kerr had by this time left the island, having embarked on board a man-of-war, which had lost some of her officers in a recent engagement, and the only friend remaining to cheer or converse with him on his troubles, was the trusty Joe Smith. And, worthy and honest fellow that he was, he was scarcely fitted for a constant companion to John Miles, now that their landsman's life deprived them of duties and subjects of mutual interest. Perhaps, never since he had been torn from home and country, had our poor farmer felt such utter depression and

hopelessness for the future as he did during those dreary and tedious weeks at Gibraltar, at the side of the sick bed of the suffering commander of the unfortunate "Ocean."

One day, when it had been unusually hot, the Captain faintly called John Miles to his side.

"Are you alone, Miles?"

"Yes, sir, Smith is gone to his supper. Did you want anything I can do for you, sir?"

"Yes, Miles, but not anything for myself; though I know how good and attentive you have been to me."

"Please God, you'll be well soon, sir."

"I don't expect it, Miles; I never felt thus before, and I think I shall not get better; and I don't much mind now."

"Oh, sir, don't talk so, there are many would grieve for you, sir."

A sad smile came over the sufferer's face.

"Would she?" he murmured to himself; "perhaps she might, she was always gentle and kind."

A pause followed, and then he said:

"Miles, I don't think I shall ever leave this place, but you will, and I hope you'll get your discharge. I've spoken to the doctor about you, and he says he will represent your case in the right quarter."

"It's very good of you to think of me, when you're so ill, sir."

"You have been a good and faithful nurse to me, John, and you'll find I've not forgotten you, nor Joe Smith, when I'm gone. But, listen, if you look in my belt there, you'll find a packet of papers. Take care of them, and if anything happens to me, give them to the person they are directed to, and he will see that my wishes are attended to, and you and Smith receive your reward. And now I am sleepy, so give me my medicine, and I sha'n't want you again."

John obeyed, and then examined the belt for the packet, for some of the Captain's hints had given him a great desire to look at the direction it bore. He soon discovered it, where it had been carefully placed on the night of the storm, and to his no small surprise, he found it was addressed to

"Dr. Bright,

"Dellcombe.

"Care of John Miles."

"Was this the secret of the Captain's strange interest in himself, as coming from Dellcombe?"

CHAPTER XIV.

DAYS and weeks had passed since the arrival of Linda Steinen at the Castle of Rosenstein, and during that period the two cousins had become gradually more intimate, and more apparently dependent on each other's society. Harry began to feel any pursuit or pleasure incomplete unshared by his pretty, lively cousin; and Linda, on her side, applied to Harry in every difficulty, and called on him for all the little services and sympathies which a girl's every day life so constantly requires.

Her walks and rides were always considered dull and soon given up, if Harry was unable, from any cause, to accompany her; her music was either practised with him or with a view of pleasing him afterwards; the flowers and plants under her especial care were always tended in his company, and, in short, the two were fairly inseparable.

Was this love? The grandfather and good Mr. Maxwell had their own hopes and wishes on

the subject, and sometimes exchanged smiles and nods as they watched the young pair at the piano, or wandering together on the terrace, or poring over some old German author, which the more experienced eye and taste of the young Austrian made plain to her English cousin.

"Charles," said Mr. Lindheim, one day, when Harry and Linda had set off on a long ride to the forest, "do you not think our children are as well suited to each other as if we had ourselves brought them up on one system of education and training?"

"It seems so, indeed," said Mr. Maxwell, "and no wonder, for my Agnes was Harry's preceptress for many years, and always had the greatest influence over him. And her sister was worthy of her, my dear sir, and has trained up Linda in her own steps."

"And you would like her for a daughter, as well as one of your English lasses," said Mr. Lindheim, smiling.

"I chose a German bride," replied Mr. Maxwell, with a sad answering smile, "and my own married life was one long happiness. I can wish nothing better for my boy than that he may be equally blest."

"And you do not think Harry has any other fancy, do you, Charles? Few youths reach his age without being in love, or thinking themselves so."

"Harry has been so secluded, it is impossible,"

said Mr. Maxwell, thoughtfully. "There are no young girls within five miles of the Manor House, and since he grew old enough for visiting, poor Agnes' health was too delicate to admit of it."

"I thought he looked rather conscious one day, when you spoke of some young girl in your neighbourhood whose father was missing," observed Mr. Lindheim. "Could there be any attachment between them?"

"Nelly, little Nelly Miles," repeated Mr. Maxwell, in surprise. "Oh, no; she is the daughter of one of my tenants, but not in a station of life for Harry to think of her, though they are most worthy people, and great favourites of mine, as they were of my poor wife."

"Have the young folks been much thrown together?"

"Well, yes, rather more than you would expect. Agnes, having no daughter, and Nelly being a pretty, gentle little creature, it was natural for her to have the child with her a good deal. But still I never thought of anything of that kind, nor Agnes either, I am certain."

"Very likely," was the quiet reply.

"Shall I ask Harry the question?" said Mr. Maxwell, after a few minutes' pause. "He is a truthful, frank-hearted boy, and I am sure would not deceive me for a moment."

"Oh, no; wait a little," said Mr. Lindheim, whose knowledge of the world and of human nature was a great deal more comprehensive than that of the simple Squire of Dellcombe. If there is anything, it will soon die away at Harry's age, and now that he sees what a girl of his own station and education can be, it will drive any boyish fancy out of his heart."

Again there was a pause.

"If the thing goes on as we wish, Charles," said Mr. Lindheim, "I intend to leave my property to the children mutually, after my death. And while the old man lives, you must spare them for half the year to me, or, what will be better, come with them yourself, and make a happy family party, to cheer my last days."

"As you will, my dear sir," said Mr. Maxwell, grasping his father-in-law's hand. "My heart is in my Agnes' grave; and the only happiness left to me is in the society of those near and dear to her, and who loved her as she deserved."

"Then it is settled," said the old man, "and it only remains to give the young folks a little time, and then a little encouragement will make all right with them. I can answer for Colonel Steinen's consent."

While the seniors were thus settling the destiny of those so dear to them, Harry and Linda were

sitting side by side on the trunk of a tree, having left their horses with the groom at the entrance to the forest, while they strolled about its intricate and leafy paths.

Harry's thoughts were by some unaccountable process of association unusually carried back to his own house—his beloved Dellcombe, and the young girl whose image was naturally connected with every scene and every spot on which memory could dwell. We say "unusually," for truth to tell he had not of late been so constantly and sadly engrossed by regrets for his betrothed, and eager desire to return to her as he had been before Linda's arrival. But let us do justice to the true-hearted lover of sweet Nelly Miles. It was not that he had changed, or his affection for her had cooled, but simply that Linda's vivacity and warm, natural manner towards himself, and her readiness to enter into all his tastes and pursuits, had made the time pass more agreeably, and altogether occupied his mind, as things present always do, however much we love the absent.

But on this day, a longing to see Nelly and Dellcombe again—to sit by her side, as he now did by Linda's, to look in her clear blue eyes, and hear her voice come over him ; and he remained for some time silent and abstracted, looking at the prospect,

which an opening in the thick trees revealed to them.

Linda had spoken to him more than once, and he had either not answered, or in such absent tones as proved he scarcely knew what she had said. At last the gay girl laid her hand on his own, and bending forward, looked archly up in his face.

"Cousin," she said, in soft, musical tones. "Cousin, are you in love?"

Harry started—

"In love, Linda—who should I be in love with?"

"With me, of course, Harry; you are very ungallant to suppose anything else."

Harry coloured; he was too much in earnest in his own feelings, and too taken by surprise to be able to reply in the same tone as his gay cousin had spoken.

"You know, Linda, I—I am very fond of you; and—and—I love you as a sister already."

"And would do your best to please our dear old grandfather, and your kind, good father, if they wished you to like me better still," said the girl, gravely, though her dark eyes danced with gay, mischievous delight at poor Harry's confusion.

"I—I don't quite understand you, Linda. What do my father and grandfather wish, do you suppose?"

"What I am very glad to see you do not, dear Harry," said Linda, more seriously, and looking frankly in his crimsoned face. "Indeed, I knew all about it from the first, or I would never have spoken to you as I did just now. I am not quite so bad as that, though I am a madcap, the Frau says."

Harry took the hand she held out, and kissed it, and we don't think Nelly could have been angry if she had seen him do so.

"What do you know, Linda, dear?"

"That you are in love with some pretty English girl, cousin Harry. Come, confess it all to me, as if I were your sister, and perhaps I will tell you a little secret of my own afterwards."

"Well," said Harry, "I do love you like a sister, Linda, and I shall be very glad to have some one to speak to, for I have never told any one yet about it, and yet I feel almost wrong to keep it from my father, and then confide it to some one else—even to you, Linda."

"Perhaps we may find out that it will be best to tell my uncle, and grandpapa too, when we have laid our wise heads together, Harry. But, indeed, I don't wonder you wouldn't trouble your father while he was so sorrowful and ill. Only when I could see they were laying plans about you and me, Harry, I thought it a great deal better we should

understand each other, for you know we should neither like to vex them, or—or—ourselves either.”

Thus urged, Harry could no longer hesitate, and by degrees related to his fair cousin the little story of his early companionship with Nelly, and the gradual growth of his love for her.

“She is very pretty, Linda,” he said, “not quite like you, perhaps; and then she is not so clever as you are, nor quite so merry; but still she is a charming little creature, and—”

“And I am sure I should love her, for your sake, Harry, and as to the cleverness, I dare say she knows a great many things that I don’t, and is a great deal more sober and steady than I am.”

“But then she is only a farmer’s daughter, Linda, and I don’t think my father will like that for me, though he is very fond of Nelly; and my mother loved her like a daughter. And I remember now my poor mother made me promise, on her death bed, I would not go contrary to my father’s wishes, and said she hoped she had not done any harm while meaning to be kind to Nelly. I understand what she meant now.”

Linda looked grave for a moment. She had some of the German ideas of rank and birth; but she was too young and loving, and kind-hearted to think of such things long.”

“Never mind, Harry,” she said, “It will all

come right at last, I'm sure. I tell you what I will do: I will talk to dear good grandpapa about it, and persuade him to take your part, and manage it for you, with my uncle."

"But, Linda—if he wishes what you say—"

"Well, he will be a little sorry at first, but he will soon get over it, and make us all happy at last. And besides, I shall explain to him that there is another reason why this plan could not have been carried out; I told you I had a secret, too, Harry; shall I tell it you?"

"Pray do, dear; everything will be interesting to me that concerns you."

Linda blushed and stammered a little, as she told her tale, which at length Harry made out to be simply this. The brother of a school-fellow of hers, an officer in the Austrian army, had fallen in love with her, when she was quite a child, and Linda returned his love. But the youth of one of the parties, and the profession of the other were insuperable objections in Colonel Steinen's eyes, and he had at first positively refused his consent. However, Linda's tears and entreaties, and the high character of her lover, had so far modified his decision, that he had agreed to give his consent to the engagement conditionally. There was to be no correspondence, and no thought of marriage till Linda was nineteen, and the present cruel war had

ceased. And under these circumstances it had been judged more prudent to keep the matter secret for the present, even from the relatives of the persons concerned.

"But now, Harry," said Linda, "I shall not scruple, if I find it necessary, to tell grandpapa all about it. For you see, I am nineteen next May, and Isidor says the war cannot go on much longer, and then, I suppose, we shall be married in the summer. What fun it would be, if you and Nelly were to be married at the same time."

And the light-hearted girl laughed merrily at the idea. Harry could not be so sanguine, but he thanked his pretty cousin warmly for her interest in his affairs, and expressed his sincere hope that she would be as happy as she deserved.

"And now having settled all this, Harry, I think we had better go home," said Linda, rising. "Poor Joseph will be quite tired waiting for us."

They retraced, or thought they retraced their steps; but, either they were too pre-occupied to observe the right turnings, or the declining sunbeams deceived them, for after walking for some little time, they found they had fairly missed their way—in plain English—they were lost in the forest.

When this fact became too plain to admit of any doubt, Linda at first looked rather blank and

frightened, then regaining her gay spirits she laughed outright—

“What poor helpless babes in the wood we shall be, Harry,” she exclaimed. “Will you sweep up some leaves, and cover me up with them, cousin. There won’t be any wolves, or wild boars to frighten us, for grandpapa said they were quite cleared from this forest, some months ago.”

But Harry could not respond heartily to her gay jest. He knew that the nights were getting very cold, especially in the forest, and besides, their grandfather and Mr. Maxwell would be terribly alarmed, so that even if Linda escaped without injury, there would be serious discomfort, if not danger, to their anxious relatives. He placed Linda on the trunk of a tree, while he scoured the forest in different directions, hoping to regain the right path. He called on Joseph, but the thick foliage of the trees smothered the tones of his voice. At length he returned to his cousin, fatigued and dispirited.

“What can I do for you Linda, dear? You will catch cold and be ill, and they will be terribly frightened at the castle.”

“Never mind me, Harry—I shall do very well; and as soon as daylight comes, we shall find the right path. Only I am sorry for grandpapa and uncle.”

Hours wore on, and if Harry's heart had not been so completely steeled against all attractions but Nelly's, it would certainly have been in greater danger from Linda's sweet, patient fortitude and unselfish concealment of her sufferings, than from her beauty and lively, winning manners in ordinary times. She became evidently very faint and cold—and her head drooped against the tree overcome with exhaustion and sleep—still she did not complain, but tried to assure Harry that there was nothing the matter. The young man put his arm round her, endeavouring to support and shelter her delicate form from the night air, but he himself was suffering sadly from the cold, and each moment he fancied he heard the howling of wild animals in the distance. Linda, more accustomed to such sounds, assured him, however, that they were only produced by the whistling of the wind among the trees.

It was a long—interminable night—still there was no trace of dawn, or even the first grey of the early morning in the sky. Harry supported the gradually drooping form of the exhausted Linda, himself scarcely more animate than she was, and prayed earnestly for the return of the day, or the arrival of help. At last, a faint streak of light was distinguishable. Was it the dawn of day? No, it was only in one direction, and too low for the

heavens, even in the horizon. It came nearer, then voices loudly shouting their names were heard, and soon lanterns and men were visible searching eagerly for the lost ones. A few moments sufficed to bring the seekers and the sought together, and Linda was soon taken from her trying position, and carried by the servants to the entrance of the forest, where a vehicle was in waiting, which rapidly drove off to the castle. The servants informed Harry that old Joseph had fallen sound asleep, during the time he was waiting for them and when he awoke, it was pitch dark. He had therefore been sensible enough to return to the castle and give alarm, instead of risking losing them and himself, by attempting to discover them.

Mr. Lindheim had with great difficulty prevented his son-in-law from going himself to seek the absentees, but he had at last convinced him that it was much wiser to trust to those who knew the country well, and remain at home to prepare for their reception.

A very short time brought the young fugitives to their home, and the Frau herself superintended the placing of the exhausted Linda in bed, and administered warm cordials, while Harry gave an account of the misadventure to his father and grandfather, before taking the rest he needed.

"Well, well, you took as much care of the child

as you could, I don't doubt," said Mr. Lindheim, "and she's quite worth a little pains and self-denial, is she not, Harry?"

Harry's reply would have been yet more hearty, if he had not remembered Linda's warning, and when he went to bed, he laid awake—tired as he was—for some time wondering whether his father would really be very much disappointed that he would not marry Linda, and still more anxious to know whether he would object to his marrying Nelly.

Morning came, and Harry's first inquiry was for his cousin, who was still, he found, sleeping. He then went to his father's room to see whether he had suffered from the agitation of the previous night. Mr. Maxwell was nearly dressed, and though he was pale and evidently rather shaken by the alarm and broken rest, he yet looked happier and even kinder than usual, as he held out his hand to his son.

"Well, my boy, all right again, I see, And have you heard of our pretty Linda?"

"She is asleep, they tell me, sir, and has had a good long rest. I hope she will be quite well when she wakes."

"I hope so, Harry; she is a dear sweet girl, and almost as dear to me as a daughter."

Harry muttered some rather unintelligible words of assent.

"You are very fond of your cousin, I think, Harry."

"Certainly, I am, sir, every one must love her."

Mr. Maxwell completed his toilette, before he spoke again.

"We ought to hear soon from our friend Dr. Bright. I could not help thinking of what poor Mrs. Miles and the children must have suffered when John disappeared, while I was in such distress about you last night."

Harry's ingenuous countenance was never capable of concealing his emotions, and this sudden allusion to Dellcombe and his darling Nelly, immediately following Linda's hints and his father's last remarks, brought the blood violently to his face.

"My boy, what is the matter? Are you ill?" asked Mr. Maxwell, in terror.

"No, dear father, not ill."

"What then, Harry?" exclaimed his father, gazing earnestly in his agitated face. "Don't hide anything from me, my son; you are my all in this world now."

Poor Harry was still more overcome by this tender reproach, and his lips trembled with his efforts to swallow his emotions.

"Dear father, forgive me. I did not mean to conceal anything from you, only I was afraid."

"Afraid! Harry, of your father."

"Not of you, my dearest father ; but I thought what I wished might grieve you, and I could not bear that."

Mr. Maxwell's nerves had been so shaken that any idea of fresh trouble or suspense was too much for him. A vague terror seized his mind ; he sank on a chair, and looked piteously in Harry's face.

"Speak, Harry, don't keep me in suspense."

"Well, then, sir, I am in love ; deeply and truly in love."

Mr. Maxwell gave a long sigh of relief.

"Thank God," he exclaimed. "I thought it was worse, Harry. I expected you wanted to leave me. But you would not do that ; you will never leave your father—it would kill him."

"Never, never," said Harry, with emotion. "That would be cruel and ungrateful indeed. Trust me, dear father."

"But, Harry, you said you were in love. Remember, I cannot live long, so if your marriage would force you to leave me, wait till I am gone. I would give you all I have in the world to keep you with me."

"It does not need, father ; she whom I love will never separate me from you—she would be your daughter."

"Who is it ?—Linda ?"

"No, father—Nelly Miles."

"Nelly—my son ; I could not have believed she—"

"Hush, father ; do not blame her whom I have loved longer than I know myself ; who is my wife in the sight of Heaven, though not of man."

"And you never told me, Harry."

"I did not tell *her* till just before we left, father, and could not trouble you with such things while you were so sad. But, oh, dear father, you, who loved my dear mother so well, who can understand my feelings, do not blight your only child's happiness by refusing your consent."

Mr. Maxwell was deeply moved.

"Say no more, Harry. I might have had other hopes and plans for you ; but your happiness is my first object, and she shall be yours."

"God bless you, my kind father ; it will be the study of my life, and Nelly's too, to make you happy."

"And I shall not be left alone : the thing I have so dreaded. You shall have the Manor House, and I will take the cottage ; or, perhaps you would not object to the old man's living with you."

"My dear father, do not speak so ; you wound me to the quick. No ; let us live with you, and be your dutiful, attentive children."

At that moment Mr. Lindheim entered ; his face half amused, half vexed, in its expression.

"Well, Charles, what is it? You and our boy here look as if something had happened since the escapade of last night."

"Harry has made a confession to me, my dear sir."

"So has Linda to me, when I went to see how the child was, just now. Well, my boy, you look very happy—what is it?"

"I am going to be married, dear grandfather, to one I have long loved."

"Who is she, my boy?"

"The daughter of the farmer whose disappearance I related to you, my dear sir," put in Mr. Maxwell; "you must not be surprised," he added, seeing Mr. Lindheim's grave look. "She is a lovely girl, and was much with my Agnes; and, perhaps it is better for Harry to have a dear, good little creature like that, whom I have always loved, than some great lady, who would not let him attend to his old father."

Harry seized his father's hand in ecstasy.

"Dear, dear father, we will never leave you; oh, you have made me the happiest of mortals."

"Well, well, my boy, you must wait till we go home, and then I don't see why we should delay your marriage," said the now happy father.

"And you will come too, dear grandfather," said

Harry. "Next to Linda you would love Nelly, when you saw her."

Mr. Lindheim shook his fist good-humouredly at the young man ; " You and Linda are wayward children," he said, but he did not look at all displeased.

They adjourned to the breakfast-parlour ; a happier trio could hardly have been found.

Linda was not there, but so much better that she would join them at luncheon ; so the maid who waited on her said.

Alas ! how transitory are the joys, if not the sorrows of life. The bright happiness of that morning was to be clouded over ere another hour had passed. Scarcely had the meal been concluded, when the sound of a horn fell on their ears.

" Ah, a courier," observed Mr. Lindheim. " I dare say he brings a good packet of letters for us."

A servant entered.

" Any for me, Albert ?"

" Yes, sir ; two for you, and one for Mr. Maxwell, and one for Miss Linda."

Mr. Lindheim opened his letters, and was deeply engaged in their contents, when he was startled by an exclamation of sorrow from Mr. Maxwell. Harry had left the room just before the courier arrived, so the two gentlemen were alone.

"What is it, Charles? Anything wrong at Dellcombe?"

Mr. Maxwell looked deeply moved, and did not at once speak, but handed the letter to his father-in-law.

Mr. Lindheim read it rapidly.

"Poor boy, poor Harry!" he said. "It will be a sad blow for him. I am glad you were not more harsh on the subject this morning. Charles, truly it is a lesson; how transient are human hopes and vain human plans. But I hear the poor lad's voice, joyous enough. You must try and support him in this trial, Charles."

"It will break his heart, I fear," said the father.

Harry now entered, looking bright and joyous, till the sad expression of their countenances attracted his attention to the open letter in his father's hand.

"What has happened, my dear father—anything wrong at home? Speak, I entreat you. Your griefs are mine, and I would gladly bear them for you."

"Alas, my poor boy! It concerns you even more than me," said Mr. Maxwell. "Nerve yourself, Harry, for sad news, and try to bravely bear the bitter trial that I fear awaits you."

"For mercy's sake, my dear father, do not keep

me in this dreadful suspense. What has happened? Nelly? tell me."

Mr. Maxwell put the letter in his hands by way of reply, and Harry devoured the contents with a tearless eye and blanched cheek.

The letter was from Dr. Bright, and ran as follows—

"I am grieved to tell you, that a violent and infectious fever has broken out at Dellcombe. Your faithful servant, Peter Johnson, is now lying dead at the Manor House; and many of the villagers, who you well know, have fallen victims to this visitation. The last attacked by it, is poor Nelly Miles, who has been like a little angel among the sick, and was last night seized herself with the worst symptoms. Should she be taken, not only her mother and brother, but the whole village will be her mourners; for, as you know, she is universally beloved. But we shall do all we can to save her, and she is young, and may struggle through."

Harry laid down the letter without a word, and left the room. Mr. Maxwell was about to follow him, but Mr. Lindheim prevented him.

"Let him alone for a short time; it is better for him; and presently, he will be able to listen to us more composedly. Harry has plenty of firmness and will know how to bear trouble, like a man."

Harry had rushed to his own chamber, and, as his grandfather rightly imagined, was seeking strength and comfort where alone it could be found. "I will hope and trust," he thought, as he rose from his knees; "for who knows whether God, in His infinite mercy, may not bring her through this terrible malady? And if not, may we, through His grace, be united hereafter in His heavenly kingdom."

He brushed away the manly tears, which had gathered in his eyes, and returned to the breakfast room.

"I must set off instantly to Dellcombe, my dear father," he said: "God grant I may find her still alive. My heart's love to die so young," he murmured, "and my bright hopes so soon extinguished. Oh, it cannot be, it is too dreadful."

"I would not seek to detain you, Harry," said his father; "and yet, if the poor child does not recover, it will be of little avail, save to distress you yet more."

"I could not remain here, sir, it would kill me."

"Then I shall accompany you, Harry."

"No, dear father, do not think of it. I shall travel night and day, for the chance of finding her yet alive, and you could not bear the fatigue. If all is over, I shall return at once to you here, and never see Dellcombe more."

"We shall miss you sadly, my boy," said Mr. Lindheim, kindly.

"I know you will at first, my kind grandfather, but Linda will more than supply my place; her bright spirit would cheer any one."

"Who is Linda to cheer?" said a gay voice, but the bright smile vanished, as she saw the grave looks of the party, and soon heard the cause of their distress. "Dear Harry, be comforted, she will get better, I feel sure she will; she is young, and well tended, and there is every hope for her. Do not yield to desponding fears, or you will not be fit to nurse her back to health, when you get to Dellcombe, and perhaps break down on the journey yourself."

It was impossible to resist the cheering tone, the hopeful confidence of the young Austrian; and even Harry began to feel a gleam of hope shine through the gloom.

"When do you start, my boy?" said Mr. Lindheim.

"As soon as possible, sir; in an hour's time, if it can be managed."

Preparations were instantly made for his departure, and just as the sun was sinking behind the forest trees, a postchaise drove up to the castle, and Harry proceeded to bid farewell to his sympathizing relatives. He did not forget good old Frau

Hoffman even in that moment of haste and anxiety, but that old woman was asleep in her chair, and he just touched her cheek with his lips and left her. It was the last time he saw her; for a short time after, she sank peacefully away, almost in her slumbers, so gradual was the decay of her mortal frame.

Harry was followed by the fervent blessings of his father and grandfather, and the warm and affectionate wishes of his cousin Linda; and, long after he left the castle, he seemed to hear their voices, and see their loved faces gazing sadly on him. The trio who remained ascended to the top of the keep, and watched the chaise, till the shades of the rapidly increasing darkness hid it from their view.

Harry was soon once more by the side of his beloved Rhine, which faintly loomed in the twilight, as the chaise rapidly whirled along its shadowy indistinct banks. Then darkness fell on the scene, and he could only hear the steady current of the river, in the still night, but not distinguish its course. At midnight, however, the moon arose, shedding her pale silvery light over rock and river, and Harry sank to sleep, and dreamed a long and vivid dream.

He saw his Nelly, in the form of an angel; her sweet eyes closed, and the heavy eye-lashes lay on

her white face. A wreath of lilies encircled her brow, and by her side stood her weeping mother. Then several of the villagers came on the scene, and took a last look at her in her narrow bed; some of them wept as they knelt by the coffin, and placed simple flowers on her form, as a last token of their affection. Then the scene suddenly changed, and he thought he was leading his young bride from the altar; the children were strewing her path with flowers; the soft summer air was full of joyous sounds, and as they took their way back to the Grange, blessings and hearty cheers greeted their appearance. And as he gazed at his lovely bride, he thought he was supremely blest. The dream appeared to him a good omen, and we will leave him with his sad, yet happy thoughts, to pursue his hurried journey to England, while we return once more to Dellcombe.



CHAPTER XV.

WE left Keziah Bright condoling with her young friend, exchanging confidences and assurances of sisterly love.

"Come, dearest Nelly, dry those eyes, and calm yourself, before you return home. Believe me, my little sister, you will feel much happier now you have confided in me."

"I know that, dear," she said, pressing her lips to her friend's cheeks. Keziah clasped her again in her arms.

"I cannot tell you how much I love you; I think I should even be jealous of Harry, should he come and take you away from us."

Nelly began to weep, and her head fell upon her friend's shoulder, and for some time she neither spoke nor moved.

"Come," said Keziah, gently, "the day is closing, and your mother will be alarmed at your absence."

"I am ready, Keziah."

When they opened the door to sally forth, so oppressive and thick was the atmosphere, they both fell back in great alarm.

"What! what can it be? Surely, there is a fire in the village!"

Alas! it was no fire, but an autumnal blight. A dense, heavy, hot vapour encompassed the whole village; near the river it was thicker. It seemed to come from the moor; then, sailing down the Dell, dispersed itself over the whole neighbourhood.

"Let us hurry," said Nelly, "for the storm will overtake us before we reach the Grange."

As they hastened onward, men and women were grouped together outside the cottage doors.

"You had better come into my cottage, and take shelter, young ladies," said a villager. "The storm will be down in a minute. I never saw it look so black but once before, and that was many years ago, long before either of you were born."

"Thank you, Jones," they said. "We shall reach the Grange before it comes on."

"I don't think you will, miss. However, do as you like."

They now quickened their pace, and, just as they entered the meadow, unexpectedly encountered the Doctor.

"Goodness me, girls, why this speed? What a fever you are both in!"

"We were hurrying to escape the storm, but, dear father, what does this dense atmosphere forebode? How intense the heat is! We seldom have storms so late as this."

The Doctor looked puzzled.

"It is, indeed, strange, and the heat is enough to send all the dogs in the village mad, but anon we shall know what it predicts. I fear this violent exertion will bring on another headache, Nelly?"

The girl blushed, and looked confused.

"She is much better to-day, papa, and here come your mother and Tom to meet you, Nelly, so good-bye."

When father and daughter were alone, the former said—

"Why did Nelly blush when I referred to her headache? What little mystery is there going on? Something is wrong with that dear child, and you know what it is, Keziah?"

"I do, dear father, and, when we reach home, I will tell you all Nelly has confided to me to-day, for I long for your advice."

As they passed through the village, many were the observations concerning the weather.

"The storm seems to linger," said one.

"What are we to expect, Doctor?" said another.

"An earthquake," joined in one, jokingly.

"Fie, Will, you wicked fellow! Don't jest on such subjects," and the sister turned pale at the idea.

"It will come soon," said the Doctor. "Perhaps too soon."

The night came—still the tempest lingered.

When Keziah and her father were seated in their cheerful parlour, the former said—

"Now, dear papa, you will never guess what I am going to tell you."

"Little simpleton; do you think your old father is blind? Of course, it has only one explanation. Nelly is in love."

"How could you know that?" said Keziah, in great surprise.

"A little bird brought the tale."

"Oh! nonsense!—a little bird!"

"Well, then, my dear, I guessed she is in love, and suppose it to be with my noble-hearted boy, Harry Maxwell."

"Now, really, papa, you seem as well informed as I am. Therefore, I shall say no more."

"Don't be jealous of my discernment, my dear. I am glad I have guessed right, for I should have been very sorry had she centred her affections on anyone else."

"Oh! you dear, good, darling papa," said Keziah, jumping up, and embracing him. "How like your dear self! And do you really believe Mr. Maxwell would give his consent to their marriage. You know how proud he is of his family?"

"Yes; but he is devoted to his only child; and I think Harry's happiness is dearer to him than pride; and I believe he will yield if he thinks it is at stake."

"Oh, how pleased I should be!" exclaimed Keziah! "What delight in seeing Nelly, Harry's bride. I think they are so well suited. I do hope nothing may occur to—"

She stopped, for the memory of her own blighted hopes rushed forth on her mind.

The image of her dead lover rose up before her, and she sat silent and motionless.

"Come, my child, I know what you are thinking of. Do not grieve. It was the will of God."

"I know it, dear papa; but, sometimes, it will return fresh and vivid on my mind. Good-night, I am tired and foolish."

She retired to her room, and, opening her Bible, found peace and comfort in her Saviour's touching and soothing words.

On the following morning, all were surprised to see the oppressive vapour still lingering in and

around the village—for, as yet, no storm had broken forth.

The labourers went to their daily tasks, but not with their usual energy—so overpowering was the atmosphere.

For nearly a week the noxious blight hung over Dellcombe and its neighbourhood, sometimes a little dispersed by the south-east wind, but then returning with even denser thickness.

It was about half-past two in the morning of the fifth day of this phenomenon that Dr. Bright was aroused from a heavy slumber by a loud ringing at his surgery bell.

He put his head out of the window and inquired who was there?

“It is I, sir—George Gilbert.”

“What do you want, George.”

“Please sir, father was taken ill last night, and mother says would you come and see him?”

“Ah!” said the doctor, soliloquising, “my fears are already realized. Wait, boy, I will be with you in a few minutes.”

As they passed, many of the villagers’ heads were thrust out of windows inquiring what had happened.

“Can I be of any use to you, Dr. Bright?” called out the young man who had predicted the earthquake.

"No, thank you, Will ; you had better get to bed again."

"If I do, I can't sleep, sir ; I don't know what's the matter with me, but I feel very queer."

The doctor and the boy continued their walk, and presently stopped at a small cottage, pleasantly situated in a pretty garden.

A woman came out to meet him, looking very pale and frightened ;—

"I am glad you are come sir, my poor husband is very bad, but I am so sorry to have brought you out of your bed this time in the morning."

The doctor now entered the cottage, and approaching the sufferer, said cheerfully ; "So Gilbert, you don't feel well?"

The poor man spoke with great difficulty, for his throat was parched and ulcerated, his tongue cracked and dry.

The doctor examined him attentively.

The symptoms were unusual.

Sometimes acute pains racked every part of his body, succeeded by shivering fits, and burning fever ; not the slightest moisture was on his skin, and his pulse was flickering, yet quick.

"I'll be back Gilbert, in a few minutes," said the doctor hurrying from the cottage.

Ere he reached the road a pair of wild-looking eyes met his.

"Bless me, Will, what's the matter with you?"

"That's just what I want you to tell me, doctor, my head seems on fire, and my throat is as dry as a chip."

"Go home, at once to bed, and I'll be with you in less than half-an-hour."

"I can't, sir, I can't lie, or sit, or do anything, I feel as if—"

"What, Will?"

"As if I were going mad, sir!"

The doctor was alarmed, for the boy's face indeed looked wild.

"Here we are at my door, come into the surgery and I will give you something that may soothe you."

He mixed a cooling draught for the poor fellow, who drank it eagerly; his head was burning.

"You had better sit down, Will, while I prepare Gilbert's medicine."

"Is he very ill, sir?"

"Yes, very—but I hope soon to bring him round."

"I think I will go home now, sir, your medicine has quieted me a little."

"Don't go to work to-morrow morning, and I'll come and see you."

"Well, if I'm not worse, sir, I think I must try, for you know there is no one but me to support my old mother and sister."

"I know you are a good lad, Will, and I hope you will soon be all right again."

"I trust so, sir, for their sake."

But the hopes were not to be realized. Three days afterwards he was a corpse; his aged mother only survived the shock a few days, and his sister was kindly engaged as servant by Mrs. Miles, though she was not to enter on her duties for some time for fear of infection.

The doctor fulfilled his promise of returning at once to poor Gilbert; but as he was hurrying to the cottage a woman ran up to him, large tears rolling down her cheeks—

"Oh, doctor, come to my poor baby, he is very ill, with something which I cannot make out. I never saw it before."

The doctor hastily quieted her by promising to come as soon as possible, and she returned to her suffering child.

But as the worthy man paused for a moment, and looked round on the pretty village, large drops of perspiration burst from his brow, and a tear fell as he gazed on those peaceful homes, so soon, as he feared, to become the abode of sickness and grief.

Too well he guessed the horrors which awaited those who now slept fearlessly and peacefully in those lowly but happy dwellings. Little did they

dream that a contagious and virulent disease had broken out amongst them, of which too many were doomed to become victims, and the rest sorrowing and stricken mourners.

We will touch as lightly as possible on the horrors of the epidemic which desolated the formerly healthy village. No less than fifty times in one week did the death knell announce that another soul had passed to its last account. At all hours in the day and night there were four persons going about from house to house, like ministering angels, to relieve the sufferings they could not check. The doctor, in his skill, ministering to the body—the clergyman, Mr. Ashby, speaking peace to the departing soul—and Keziah and Nelly helping to nurse those whose relatives were gone, or themselves sick with the dire distemper.

Often did those young sisters of charity meet in the still night, and their short greeting was—

“Is that you, dear? God^be with you,” and then each passed on her different errand.

At last only one of those light forms was to be seen gliding about in the deserted village. The youngest and fairest of the two who had laboured to impart comfort and hope to the sick and sorrowing, now in her turn needed attendance and comfort. Nelly was stricken at last with the dreaded infection. Dr. Bright met her at day-

break one morning walking wearily and slowly home—two deep red spots on either cheek. He did not trust himself to speak to her, but kissing her hot brow, he drew her arm within his own, and half supported, half carried her to her house.

Mrs. Miles was watching from her bedroom window. She had fancied her child did not seem well on the previous night, and was anxiously looking for her. She caught sight of Dr. Bright, and noticed Nelly's languid face, and rushing down stairs, hurried out to meet her.

"My darling—what is it?"

"Nothing, dearest mother, only fatigue; don't be frightened."

Tom met them as they entered the house, and assisted the doctor to carry his sister to her chamber.

"Doctor!" he said hurriedly, as they descended, "has Nelly got the fever?"

The doctor shook his head.

"I hope not, Tom; it may be over-exertion, but I fear it, I confess. But don't be cast down, my lad, she will do well, I hope."

As the doctor re-entered Nelly's room, her mother was by her side, bathing her hot temples with cold water, and her tears falling silently—

"Kiss me, dear mother, do not weep, I shall get better, please a little cold water for my hands; oh, thank you, thank you, that is so refreshing."

But the malady soon gained ground, and for the next three weeks she was unconscious of everything that had passed round her. The good doctor unwearingly watched his favourite, whom he loved as his own child ; and many wept and prayed for her recovery. One evening as they were standing round her bed, her face suddenly changed from its feverish scarlet to a death-like hue ; and she lay quiet, and still as death. Her pure spirit seemed to be fast flying away to meet the sister angels, who were waiting with open arms to take her to heaven.

“Come dear friends,” said the doctor gently “pray leave the room.”

He led the weeping mother away, and Keziah sobbing followed.

Tom rested his head against his sister’s pallid face ; and crying, said—

“Take me with you, Nelly ; we cannot lose you.”

Dr. Bright stood by, struggling with his emotion, when Tom suddenly started up ;

“See, doctor, she opens her eyes, she is looking on us, she lives, God be praised, my sister, my darling sister lives !

“Cry now for joy, dear mother,” he said, rushing into her room, “our Nelly is not dead !”

They returned quietly to the chamber, where they beheld, with infinite joy, the dear child awoken as it were from death.

"Hush," whispered the doctor, "the crisis is past, and I verily believe she will recover, but I thought just now, as you all did, she was gone."

"What does my darling say?" said Mrs. Miles, bending over the angel-like form of her child.

Nelly faintly smiled, and inquired if it were long since she had been ill?—

"A month, my sweet."

"A month! so long, dear mother! I must have been a great trouble to you then?"

"No my own, only one thing has troubled us, the dreadful fear of losing you."

Tom was kneeling by the bed-side, and caressing the hand of his sister, and bathing it with hot tears.

"Kiss me, dear Tom!"

Placing the little hand gently aside, he nestled close to her, saying—

"I feared the angels were going to take you from us, and prayed fervently, if they did, to take me also."

"Good brother, I hope I may be spared to comfort you and our mother for many years to come."

All in the room were weeping, Keziah knelt down and read aloud a beautiful prayer, and then each one communed silently with God, and when they rose, night was fast approaching.

"She is sleeping calmly now," said the doctor,

"and I am sure all danger is past ; therefore, my dear Mrs. Miles, try and get a little rest, for you look indeed, wearied ; I will go home for a short time ; Tom, you come with me, and Keziah will remain."

"Only one question, father, before you go ; are there many ill now ?"

"Two only, and they are fast recovering."

Keziah was now alone with Nelly, and as she sat watching her, a little tinge of the most delicate pink suffused itself over her marble countenance, her dark brown hair, that she had begged so hard of her father to spare, fell over her shoulders.

And, as the moon's soft beams hovered over her, Keziah thought how much like an angel she looked.

"I wish Harry could see her, surely my father's letter has reached him, I am surprised we have had no reply. What do I hear?" she said, suddenly starting up and peering out into the moonlight. For some time she stood listening in breathless suspense, but the sound died away, and she returned disappointed to Nelly's bedside.

"Hark, there it is again, and something tells me the Maxwells are here! Oh! what joy for her if it be so."

Going again to the window, she saw in the broad moonlight some one hastening through the meadow.

"It must be he;" and Keziah's heart beat as if it had been her own lover she was expecting, and leaving the room, she glided noiselessly down stairs.

Whoever it might be he had chosen the grass, instead of the foot-path to walk on. Consequently, the footsteps were unheard.

While Keziah was standing in the porch, anxiously awaiting the new comer, these words (spoken sorrowfully), fell on her ear.

"Back, back grief, do not kill me now, although they tell me she is dead, I believe them not; Nelly, my own heart's love, I am coming, coming quickly."

"Stay, Harry," said Keziah, gently placing her hand on his arm: "Be calm."

"Oh, dear good friend, tell me quickly if she lives."

"She does, Harry, and is out of danger."

He answered her not, but quietly walked to the little arbour that stood by the river-side, (where he and Nelly had passed so many happy hours), and there in the calm still moonlight, he prayed.

Returning, he said to Keziah,

"Forgive me, my dear good friend, for leaving you so abruptly, without even thanking you for such joyous tidings, but my heart was too full to speak."

"I know all, Harry, follow me and you shall see her."

The next moment he was in the sick-chamber, gazing on her he loved :

“Are you sure, Keziah, she is alive ? how deadly pale she looks !”

“Fear not, I am quite sure ;” was the answer.

He took the little hand, over which Tom had been shedding tears, then leaning over her, their breath mingled.

“How calm, how beautiful she looks !”

“Hush, Harry hush, come away, you have disturbed her.”

He quietly withdrew, and secreted himself behind the curtains. Bye-and-bye she opened her eyes languidly, and looked round the room.

“What does my darling want ?” said Keziah gently.

“Are you alone ?”

“Why, Nelly ?”

“Because I thought—but no—that cannot be, he is far away, and yet it was so like my Harry’s voice.”

“Oh, how I should like to see him again, he told me to trust and wait, and so I have ; and he will come back, will he not, Keziah ?”

“Yes, love, I am sure he will.”

“Oh, happy day, come quickly, and make me glad. I hope he does not know I have suffered, for I would not give him a moment’s pain for the

world. How often I have dreamt of him, and we were always so happy."

"Yes, Nelly, and I am sure your dreams will be realized—for I am sure he loves you."

"Ah! I know that, Keziah, come, sit by me, and let us talk of him?"

"To-morrow, dear child. You must not excite yourself too much this evening. It will do you harm."

"Let me speak to her, Keziah, for one moment only."

"If you do," she whispered, "you may kill her!"

For some minutes Harry stood motionless, struggling with the workings of his warm, loving, and honest heart, that was overflowing with joy, mingled with pity and grief.

"My poor Nelly," he said, soliloquizing—"dearest and best on earth; far dearer now than ever, that I behold your suffering—oh, that you were my wife, that I might claim the right of remaining by your side, to watch over you, and minister to your every wish. Oh, my darling, I desire as much as you for that day to come quickly."

He remained thus in deep meditation for some time, motionless as a statue. Every loving word she had said came rushing through his mind, and the unbounded joy that she would be his com-

panion through life, equal in love and confidence, and would guide him gently on to the life eternal, made him feel indeed happy.

"She sleeps now," whispered Keziah. "You had better go, as I expect my father's and Tom's return every moment."

He lingered yet a short time by the little bed, and then, bending over her, pressed his lips to hers—

"Farewell, my darling, for to-night;" then, turning to Keziah, he said—

"I am ready."

He returned to his lonely Manor-house, and thought and dreamed of her he loved through the long hours of night.

The next morning brought him a visit from Dr. Bright, anxious to ascertain how matters really stood as to his two young friends' engagement, and the worthy man was glad indeed to find that it was now an open and sanctioned betrothal.

Time passed on, and Nelly was at last able to leave her room, and hear the glad tidings which awaited her. Keziah broke to her the news of Harry's return gently and gradually, but she trembled and turned very pale.

"Will he come to see me, dear Keziah?"

"Of course he will, dear, and far more freely and happily than before. There is more joy for

you, Nelly, his father knows all, and has consented to your marriage."

"Oh, Keziah, is it possible, and he will be my husband? Dear friend Keziah, my heart tells me he is here. Yes, 'tis he!" and she fell into his arms. Keziah wisely and quickly withdrew.

For some minutes Harry held her tightly, and neither of them spoke. Presently, he took her little delicate hand in his, fondled it, and, after pressing it to his lips, placed a lovely ruby ring upon her finger, in the form of two hearts, bound together by a knot of diamonds.

"Oh, my Nelly, how I love you, and my heart is full of gratitude to God for restoring you to health and to me."

Nelly only sobbed.

"Weep no more," he said, kissing her tears away; "we have nothing now to grieve for."

"I know that, Harry, but this great joy has come so quickly upon me that my heart will not so soon be quieted."

CHAPTER XVI.

WEEKS wore on, the days grew short and foggy, and were followed by the wintry snow, making the ground white and sparkling as oriental pearls.

But these changes were little heeded by our happy lovers, it was enough for them that they were together, for all to appear bright and beautiful as summer sunshine.

It was Christmas-day, and by Harry's especial request, the little knot of friends so closely connected with each other, had assembled, to keep the festive season at the Grange.

Harry and his Nelly were standing at the window, under the excuse of watching a snow storm disappear, while Mrs. Miles and her son, Dr. Bright and his daughter, were sitting round the fire, casting cheerful glances, from time to time, at the happy lovers.

"God bless them!" said the doctor: "may they never be less happy than they are now."

Evening set in; tea was brought with the lights,

and the whole party were assembled round the table, with happy hearts and faces, as became the joyful day.

Suddenly, the sound of the garden gate was heard violently swinging on its hinges, then quick steps, and a sharp knock at the door. There was something in that step—that knock, which chained the little party to their seats, and made them look at each other in speechless, half-terrified, suspense.

The knock was repeated, then the latch was lifted—hasty steps traversed the stone passage. Harry sprang to the door, opened it, and drew back with a cry of joyful surprise. Two men stood in the doorway; the first glance at whose faces made the hearts of all present absolutely stand still with ecstasy. There—regarding the little group, stood the long lost husband and father; and one who was, perhaps, more kindly remembered than he thought of, by our Keziah.

“John,—my dear,—dear husband!” “Father—our dearest father.”

“Captain George! is it possible?”

Such were the exclamations as the long separated ones met, and then came embraces, and tears, and half exclamations; questions to which no one replied, and explanations to which no one listened.

However, before the party separated, long after midnight, it was pretty well comprehended by the

agitated, happy group, that John Miles had, by Captain George's interest, got his discharge ; that the good commander himself had obtained a two years' furlough, on ground of ill health ; and that Joe Smith's term of service was over, and the old sailor returned to Fairvale.

" But how was it you did not get my letter ?" said John, when they were more composed.

" Because the vessel was wrecked," interrupted the Captain, " and all perished, save a few of the crew. I only knew it after our return to England, and would not vex you needlessly by telling you."

" Oh, Mary, what a friend has this kind gentleman been to me ; you and our children owe him a life-long gratitude ; for I should not have been here, but for his intercession."

Keziah Bright turned away, during this speech, to hide the tears she could not quite restrain. The Captain followed her and whispered :

" Thanks, Keziah, for those tears, they give me hope, after years of despairing love."

* * * * *

Time flew by—winter gave place to early spring—the days were gradually lengthening—and the marriage of Harry and Nelly was beginning to be talked of. Linda Steinen's wedding was formally fixed for the following June, and she had returned to her father's, to prepare for the long wished-for event.

Mr. Maxwell had arrived, bringing with him Mr. Lindheim, who was anxious to be present at his grandson's nuptials, and both seemed to have grown young again, for the occasion. The Grange resounded with joyous voices, and Captain George was still its beloved and honoured guest. He won the hearts of all by his goodness and fascination, and at times he hoped that even Keziah was beginning to look favourably on his suit; but, if he ever hinted at the subject, she so evidently shrank back, and avoided it, that he feared to lose all, by asking too much.

One evening, Nelly joined him, as he paced up and down the path of the river, looking very sorrowful and thoughtful.

"Are you ill, dear Captain George?" she asked.

"No, Nelly—quite well, thank you."

"Then you are sad, do let me comfort you, if I can, for I owe you so much, as we all do. Won't you tell me what is the matter?"

"What you, happily, can hardly understand, Nelly. I love one, who does not love me."

"Who would be so hard-hearted?" she said; "I think every one must love you. Who is it?"

"You will not betray my confidence, if I tell you."

"Only to Harry; we have no secrets, but he can be trusted as well as I can."

"Happy Harry," said the Captain, smiling sadly. "Well; it is a dear friend of yours."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Nelly; "I know—yes—I can see all now; it is Keziah Bright."

"You have guessed well," replied he, sadly.

"And she does not love you! Ah! it must be because of—"

She stopped, fearful of giving him pain.

"I know what you would say, Nelly, do not be afraid of speaking frankly. I know of her former engagement, for I have loved her for many long years. You do not know, perhaps, that we met soon after the death of her unfortunate lover, and I then pleaded hard for the right of consoling her, and trying to make her as happy as she could ever be again. But she could not bring herself to consent, and I returned to my profession, and have given myself up to it ever since, as my sole consolation. I have not a relation in the world, therefore I had no inducement to leave my ship, and had it not been for the wreck, I might never have seen your happy home, or Keziah again."

"And you must leave us no more," cried Nelly; "Keziah must love you, I am sure she does; only she fancies she ought not to forget the past. I shall make her hear reason, I am determined; naughty girl."

"I fear you will not succeed, my kind Nelly."

"I shall try, however," she said, smilingly.

"May you be successful," he replied, as she left him, kissing her hand encouragingly.

Next morning she went early to Keziah, and found her in her little parlour; looking rather pale and sad.

"Keziah, you must grant me a favour."

"You can hardly ask what I should refuse, my pet," said Keziah, kindly.

"Then you will make yourself, and a noble-hearted man, happy."

Keziah started and coloured.

"Has he told you?"

"I saw he was sad, and told him to confess the reason; and Keziah, you must take pity on him; he is so good, so noble, and has no one to love him. Think how desolate he will be all his life without you. I believe it will kill him, if you do not marry him, and you would never forgive yourself."

"Nonsense, Nelly."

But a tear stole down Keziah's cheek as she tried to conceal her face in her hands.

"Confess, Keziah, that you do love him a little."

Keziah did not speak, but she pressed Nelly's hand; and it was enough for the ardent girl.

"I shall go and make him happy," she cried.

"Stop, Nelly, stop!" but it was too late, she was gone.

"How glad I am to find you here, Captain George," cried Nelly; "what will you give for my news?" It was in the little meadow, and the Captain was pacing to and fro impatiently.

"Do not keep me in suspense, Nelly, if you have good to tell me."

"No; I will not be so cruel: go to Keziah, she loves you, I have discovered."

"Impossible."

"It is true, I made her confess it; and she was thinking of you, I am certain, when I went in."

"Oh! Nelly; how happy you make me. When my heart is at rest, I shall soon be well."

But the Captain, even then, with the timidity of true love, feared to try his fate; and as Keziah did not appear at the Grange for some days, he again grew despondent.

"Why don't you go to her, Captain?" said Nelly; "I am sure she is expecting you."

"I dread losing the faint hope you gave me."

"She will not refuse you, I am sure. I saw her to-day, and I could see she was anxiously looking for you."

A few minutes later, Captain George entered Keziah's parlour. She had seen his approach, and as his steps came nearer, her heart beat violently, and her cheeks became scarlet. He went up to

her, and without speaking, clasped her hand warmly in his own. She did not withdraw it.

"Keziah," he said, suddenly, sitting down by her, "will you be my wife, and make my lonely life bright and happy? Your happiness should be my chief care. Tell me quick—will you?"

His voice shook with emotion. Keziah was no coquette. She answered in a low, but clear voice:

"I will, Edward, if I can make you happy."

"Bless you, my sweet love, for those words. I will henceforth devote myself to you, and give up my profession to live here, surrounded by my dearest friends, and blessed by you, my wife. I have done my king and country good service, and you are my rich reward."

He clasped her in his arms, and she was still in his embrace, when the doctor entered suddenly. He started on seeing the novel scene.

"Mercy on me; why, what is all this? What does this mean, Keziah, child?"

"It means that, with your permission, sir, I am to become your son-in-law," replied Captain George.

Dr. Bright walked across the room, and, taking his daughter's hand, placed it in the noble-hearted sailor's.

"There, don't cry, my love. Your old father will die happy now, for I shall leave one of the best daughters that a father was ever blest with, to

the care and protection of a true-hearted, noble husband. God bless you both."

* * * *

On a lovely May morning, when the trees were heavy with sweet-scented blossoms, and a thousand birds made music in the air, Harry Maxwell and Edward George led their brides proudly from the altar.

How happy and beautiful Nelly looks as she gazes in her husband's face; and Keziah seems to have regained her youthful bloom and loveliness.

"My wife, my beautiful Nelly, what joy to feel you are all mine now," whispered Harry; and Nelly raised her sweet eyes and murmured:

"Oh, Harry, how beautiful it is to love, as I love you."

As they left the church porch, even the dark, gloomy avenue of yew trees seemed to have put on a bridal garb, by the thousand young and now delicate shoots which they had put forth.

The village children stood on either side of the avenue, robed in simple white, and strewed the path so thickly as the brides came forth, that they walked on a carpet of flowrets. Then the children sang a hymn of praise, and the old church bells sent forth their merry sounds of good will and gaiety, disturbing the old owls from their gloomy

dwelling, and bringing them out to learn the cause of such unwonted rejoicings.

The bridal party left the precincts of the church, and, as they entered the park on their way to the Manor House, where the breakfast was to be given, they passed under a beautiful arch which had been erected for them by the villagers. It was one mass of flowers, white lilac, blushing apple blossoms, laurestinus, etc. ; in the centre were these words, woven in violets and primroses—

“A long and happy life to our dear young Squire and his bride ; and to the gallant Captain George and good Miss Keziah.”

They entered the park under this porch, walking through a magnificent avenue of chestnut trees, adorned by a million clusters of rich blossoms, blushing, as it were, at their own loveliness.

The brides retired for a short time to their private apartments, while the rest of the party assembled in the great dining-room, where the breakfast was laid out.

“Mother,” said Tom, going up to Mrs. Miles, “how lovely our Nelly looks ; do you think she will love us as well, now she is Harry’s wife ?”

“Certainly, my dear boy, it will not alter her affectionate nature.”

“I don’t half like losing her, mother ; we cannot call her our own Nelly as we used to do. She

belongs to another now, and it seems very strange, after being brought up together, and loving each other as we do, to lose her so suddenly.

"But, Tom, she will always be your sister, and my daughter."

"Yes, but you know, mother, that God himself tells us that we are to leave our parents and cling to each other, when we are married, for husband and wife are one."

"The meaning of that, my dear boy, is that the husband's first earthly consideration should be his wife, and the wife's her husband; but we are also told to honour our parents, and we cannot do that without loving them, and, therefore, God's command cannot mean that we should love them less after marriage."

"Well, I will never marry, mother, for I think I should love you and my father better than my wife."

"You will think differently some day, Tom. But, come, we must not stand here. Here are Mrs. George and Nelly—see, your father, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Maxwell are blessing her."

"Ah, John," she added, "what a happy day for you and I."

Every eye was moistened, as the two couples received their parents' blessings, and, when they

rose, there was a sacred light of happiness around their bright faces.

"Well, Harry," said Mr. Lindheim, when the breakfast was over; "will you bring your pretty bride to Rosenstein Castle, and remain during the summer?"

Harry turned to Nelly, who looked startled and almost frightened at the suggestion.

"Let us stay at Dellcombe," she whispered, "where we have so many dear friends to love us, and where we are so happy."

"We will do as you wish, my darling," he said, tenderly.

"My dear grandfather," he said, "Nelly has decided for us. We cannot leave our home just yet."

"Then what is to become of me; am I to return to my lonely house, desolate?"

Nelly took his hand, and said, coaxingly—

"Dear, kind sir, my dear grandfather, will you not—"

She stopped, and Harry anticipated her wishes.

"She is right, sir, you must comply."

"Comply with what, my children."

"Stay with us at Dellcombe, and let one house hold us all."

The old man looked on them with tearful eyes for a few moments, and then said—

“As you will, my children, I will but return to give your cousin Linda a bridal blessing, and then come back to end my days with you. And, when I am gone, lay me by the side of my beloved daughter, your sainted mother; to rest there till we shall all rise again, and, as I humbly trust, be united for ever and for ever.”

THE END.

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